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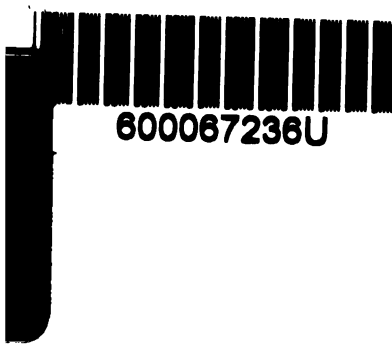
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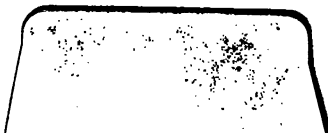
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HEREDITARY BONDSMEN;

OR,

IS IT ALL IN VAIN?

HEREDITARY BONDSMEN;

OR,

IS IT ALL IN VAIN?

BY

J. DE LIEFDE.

Hereditary Bondsamen ! know ye not
Who would be free themselves must strike the blow ?
By their right arms the conquest must be wrought ?

CHILDE HAROLD. *Canto II.*

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. I.

London :

TINSLEY BROTHERS, 8, CATHERINE STREET, STRAND.

1875.

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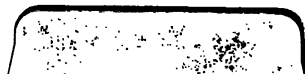
**CHARLES DICKENS AND EVANS,
CRYSTAL PALACE PRESS.**

"En parcourant les réflexions de Montesquieu, nous fûmes étonné de voir que les pensées les plus remarquables et les plus profondes lui étaient presque toujours suggérées par des ouvrages frivoles."

WALCKENAER, *Biog. Univ.*



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HEREDITARY BONDSMEN;

OR,

IS IT ALL IN VAIN?


cane against the wooden board which intervened between the grey and moss-covered stonework and the glaring announcement of a firm of auctioneers. Lord Ryan's eyes followed the motion and read that, "Whereas, the Chancery suit known under the name of *Rufus v. Rufus* having now lasted for many years, and there being evidently no chance of an early decision of the Court, the contending parties in the suit have each, severally and jointly, agreed to stay proceedings, put up the estate for auction, and, with the consent of the Court, divide the proceeds among themselves. In compliance with which instructions, the eminent auctioneers, Messrs. Nockem and Down, will sell, at the Town Hall, Thamestone, on Thursday, the — day of June, 18—, the noble, desirable, and castle-like mansion, celebrated in history and in the county of Thame-shire as Genthorpe."

The verdict of the lawyer was just. It was evident that the author of the proclamation understood not only the rudiments of grammar, but in some degree the spirit of the age. He had made the most of his opportunity and of his language, and his description, although occasionally obscure, was not incorrect. Genthorpe was, beyond a doubt, a noble and desirable property. Its antique and well-preserved beauty had made it famous for several generations; and it was looked upon by many a flourishing Chancery counsel as the mine

from which he was expected to dig his fortunes, as his father and grandfathers had done before him.

"Situate," as the author put it, "in the centre of the county, it is surrounded by noble estates and country mansions. It is within easy drive of several of the most charming parts of the river, and of that rising centre of industry, Thamestone, which is connected to London by the main line of the United Empire Railway Company, and has really converted that busy town into a suburb of the metropolis. The extensive grounds contain so many hundred acres, of which so many are pleasure ground, arable, meadow, and pasture land."

There was much to be said about the historical associations of the place, for Genthorpe was very old. A whole list of royal and demi-royal personages had stepped out into the world from its massive threshold. Elizabeth was the last sovereign who had dwelt within its walls, and on the spot where the "maiden queen" had signed the death-warrant of one of her lovers, there was a stain in the oaken floor, carefully preserved for centuries, and shown to the visitors as an Elizabethan tear. Learned antiquaries agreed that Genthorpe must have been built long before the Conquest. The exterior was such a confused jumble, that but for its venerable appearance it might have been built in the Victorian era; but on breaking down a portion of one of the walls,



undoubted traces of Saxon work had been discovered. A professor, learned in archæology, hotly argued that still more distinct traces were to be found in the foundations, and in his letter to the "Weathercock," proposed to pull down the central tower to prove the truth of his assertion. The Court of Chancery, however, probably considering that the process of ruin was going on fast enough, refused that and every other offer to examine the building; and the contending parties, who had long been of the same opinion as the Court, at last determined that the home of Norman kings and princes should be sold. They had been prudent enough to maintain at a comparatively trifling expense the old and trustworthy steward, and his staff of servants and gardeners, so that, notwithstanding years of litigation, Genthorpe was in tolerable order, and the statuary, the marble chimney-pieces, the oak carving, and the rest of the decorative work, were in such a state of preservation as to fill a bulky catalogue for the first day's sale.

Lord Ryan read much of this in the bill, although he knew every word of it beforehand, and he remained in front of the gate in pensive attitude, until his brother-in-law interrupted his thoughts.

"One would think that you were surprised, Arthur."

"I am rather startled," said Lord Ryan, quietly.

"And you have passed by these gates for years, and often told me you expected this end?"

"I expected the transfer of it, but not this sort of thing," said the nobleman, touching the bill. "It was not there yesterday."

"It was put up early this morning; and a fine row there was."

"How do you know?"

"My man Thomson saw it. He told me that Sutton would on no account have the bills on the gates, and was with difficulty prevailed upon to allow the boards to hang there."

"And so it has come at last," said Lord Ryan with a sigh; "this is the end of it all. Charles, if ever a race was great and prosperous and firmly established, it was this. Proud princes, great kings, greater warriors—— And now the Court of Chancery and the auctioneer."

"'What has been raised with the sword shall fall under the hammer,' says the preacher. Your great kings and warriors became slaves to hereditary vice, and fell; and so shall we. Let us go in and see the place."

The lodge-keeper, who had watched the two gentlemen, opened the gates with alertness.

"Mr. Sutton is at the Hall, I suppose. We have no cards. Can we go in?"

"Which, Mr. Sutton is at the Hall, my lord,"

answered the man; "and it don't matter about cards to you."

Lord Ryan nodded, and the two men passed through, arm in arm, and followed the broad gravel path that led to the house. A turn soon concealed the entrance. They found themselves enclosed in a mass of young verdure that looked upon the aged stems like the locks of childhood around weather-beaten features. Wherever their eyes roamed they beheld the signs of ancient growth and modern cultivation. The knotty and distorted giants of centuries, carefully lopped each year; the luxurious underwood that spoke of richest mould, in which every superfluous branch had been cut; the furrow drains; the carriage-road without a weed, though it had lain unused so long; the very grass bordering the footpath showed signs of attention and care.

It was deliciously cool in the deep shade on that hottest of June mornings, and the nobleman, in the full enjoyment of it, bared his iron-grey head and seated himself on a moss-bank, while his brother-in-law stepped behind an oak to light his cigar.

"If these trees could speak, what strange stories they might tell us," said Lord Ryan.

"Not unless they could have seen and heard as well," said the lawyer.

"We would scarcely be able to understand this fellow," said Lord Ryan, touching the rugged stem

behind, "unless he had learned to modernise his language."

"Don't think he is unchangeable because he is old and has taken root," said Overdon. "I dare-say he turns over a new leaf every day."

"I am very much mistaken if this is not Lord Burgos' cob," said Lord Ryan, as a mounted groom approached them, leading a saddle-horse. "I am sure it is."

"His lordship ordered me to go slowly to the gate," said the groom. "I believe he is following."

Footsteps were at that moment heard upon the gravel, and a tall man, in the bloom and vigour of manhood, approached them with firm and rapid step.

"My dear Lord Ryan, what good luck brings me in your path?" said he with some warmth.

"We are driven by that most powerful of human motives, curiosity," said Overdon.

"Attracted by the eloquence outside? They have made the best of it, certainly."

"I can scarcely say that," said Lord Ryan. "It was not possible to do justice to it."

"What! to this tumble-down, rickety concern?" exclaimed the earl, looking back towards the house.

"Nay, it is anything but that," said Overdon.

"Did you ever see finer trees?"

"There are much finer trees in front of Lord Ryan's Cottage."

"How many?" asked the owner. "I have a few cedars and oaks, and here there are at least a few thousand."

"And you will scarcely find them worth cutting."

"Mr. Sutton found them worth lopping," said Overdon. "The place looks in splendid condition."

"Yes," answered Lord Burgos, "Sutton's a good fellow—though he has many antiquated notions."

"Antiquated notions," said Lord Ryan, "which means old principles, I suppose. Does Lord Burgos sneer at them?"

"In science, certainly. Antiquated notions in science are like last year's almanacs."

"And pray," said Lord Ryan, "can you tell me where science begins in the matter of trees?"

"I can tell you where it often ends," said Overdon.

"I am curious to know."

"The most ingenious brains are exerting themselves to discover the simplest process by which trees can be converted into paper—of a crisp quality. I believe they have found something in Norway."

"I have no doubt," said the young earl, laughing, "that half these trees will fall within three months after Lord Ryan has bought the estate; though not for that reason."

He said these words carelessly, and with averted head, as was his wont; then suddenly looked the elder nobleman in the face to note the effect of his thrust. Lord Ryan returned the look with a calm smile.

"You are wrong," he said. "It is the most unlikely thing in the world to happen."

"In any case," interposed the lawyer, "I would keep the wood for our navy, when iron goes out again."

"Then you are not quite determined to buy?" asked the earl innocently.

"A man may be determined to buy," said Lord Ryan, "and yet he may be unable."

"Buying is the most delicious thing I know," said Overdon. "I believe I have a great talent that way."

"The only occupation," retorted the earl, "in which a man can have unlimited talent and very small ability."

"My brother finds," said the counsel, looking sharply at him, "that when a property of this sort is in the market, he is not the only one by a hundred who desires it."

"Probably not," murmured the earl.

"And there is an estate adjoining this, the owner of which is known to be ambitious of becoming the greatest landlord in the kingdom. Are you in a position to say what price he will pay?"

"I sha'n't bid high at all, if that's what you mean," said the earl.

"My dear Burgos," said Lord Ryan, "you would be very foolish to let it go. I shall buy nothing, except perhaps a statue or so. Sutton is within, I suppose?"

"He is, as usual, bewailing the House of Plantagenet. By-the-bye, I am afraid to-night——"

"I will hear nothing about to-night," said Lord Ryan, with kindly emphasis. "You have accepted the honorary presidency of the club, and the ceremony won't be complete without you."

"The fact is," said the earl, "the attitude of the working-men at present is so unfriendly, and is beginning to be so hostile in Thamestone, that I don't know in how far we are justified in meeting them in a friendly spirit."

"We shall never do any good if we meet them in any other," said Lord Ryan. "After all, they are men."

"Yes, no doubt; but they seem disposed to forget that we are."

"I shall be much disappointed if you stay away," said Lord Ryan. "I intended going to Herron Hall this morning, knowing that your mother had not left. And I intended asking her, as an old friend, to come over this afternoon instead of to-morrow. Eugenie is coming up this afternoon, and accompanies me to London."

"Has Mrs. Fairfax changed her mind?" asked Lord Burgos. "I thought she had determined to enter a convent."

"No, no," said Lord Ryan hastily; "it's not that. But she is given to fits of melancholy."

"Melancholy is a dangerous mood," said the earl, smiling. "Confirmed bachelors like myself know it too well."

"It is both dangerous and difficult," said Lord Ryan. "At first she would scarcely write, but now she has promised not to abandon her old father; and we are all going up after the recess. Knowing that Lady Burgos is alone, I hoped that she might drive over to-day and give my silly girl a good scolding, as she used to do."

"I am afraid," said the earl, with a slight laugh, "that Mrs. Fairfax is one of those women who can't be scolded."

"I never tried it," said her father. "But your mother always had a great influence over her. Will she come?"

"I have no doubt she will be very pleased. She was looking forward to your party."

"And you, of course?"

"And I? Do *you* ask me, Lord Ryan?"

"I do."

"Knowing that I am no ordinary visitor?"

"Yes. And I hope you will go up with us."

"Very well. I'll drive into Thamestone with

my dog-cart, and be at the club at eight precisely. Good-bye, Overdon. When did you come back from the States? And what did you think of them?"

"Not at all bad. Our cousins are not such fearful cads as they have been painted."

"Indeed! I thought you would be disgusted, because every man is his own lawyer."

"Yes—or because all men are peers."

The groom, who had lingered in the neighbourhood, rode up at a sign from his master, dismounted, and held the stirrup. The young nobleman swung himself lightly into the saddle, lifted his hat, and cantered towards the gate.

"There goes the most promising statesman of the day," said Lord Ryan, looking after him.

CHAPTER II.

THE HALL AND ITS VISITORS.

"THE most promising statesman of the day," repeated Overdon; "and yet destined to be a great failure."

"A great failure?" said Lord Ryan, with some astonishment. "And that of a man whose fire and eloquence remind one of the great Chatham."

"He is brilliant, I admit," said Overdon, "and last century he would probably have become a great man; but he has so fashioned himself on ancient models, that he is out of his time."

"I don't understand that jargon about the time," replied Lord Ryan. "He has more knowledge of affairs and more influence than any other member of the House."

"And what influence is it? You spoke of Chatham. You should have added that he bribes like Walsingham, and lies like Bacon. He is tied up in the tradition of his race; he is a slave to the policy of the Herron family, only he is a slave

without scruples. And, mark me, however brilliant, the people will never believe in him."

"What does he care for that? He never sought popularity. He loves influence and power; and you cannot deny that he has obtained those in an unusual degree for a man who is scarcely thirty."

"He has, undoubtedly," assented Overdon; "and I have often wondered at the secret of his strange success. Men who don't care for anything else seem to care for him. He will have a high position; and if Eugie could be got to like him——"

"I am afraid Eugie will never marry again," said Lord Ryan sadly. "I had great hopes that poor Fairfax would have made her happy; and he did, I think, after a fashion; but I am afraid she is spoiled now. Charles," continued he, taking his brother's arm and walking towards the Hall, "I sometimes feel sad that Heaven should have withheld an heir from me."

"It was greatly your own fault," replied Overdon. "Why did you not marry again when Eleanor died? You were young."

"I could not. By the side of her memory every beauty seemed to fade."

"Exactly what is the case with Eugenie. Your tastes have been dangerously developed, and where others would be pleased, you hesitate. For myself, I am beginning to think taste a nuisance, and an expensive one."

"It is not a mere matter of taste with Eugie," said Lord Ryan. "I have sometimes thought that her sadness and pensiveness hide a secret inclination, but of course I can't get to know it. I should feel relieved if I knew that Burgos was not indifferent to her. He will have a fine position in the country; and it would be a comfort to know that when I am gone my beautiful girl was the wife of such a man, and the daughter of such a mother."

"I do believe," said Overdon, somewhat moved, "that Lady Burgos is the only woman to whom our Eugie feels any degree of tenderness and warmth."

"And, besides myself, I believe you are the only man, Charles. If you could get the opportunity some day, I wish you would try and sound her. She may reveal some hidden thought."

"That's not very likely—but I may try. Behold us now at the sacred edifice."

Another turn of the road had brought them in front of the Hall, which stood out boldly on the other side of a lawn, with a background of brilliant verdure. The massive centre tower, with its deep embrasured windows and crenellated roof, the wings unequal yet not out of proportion, the quaint arches supported by still quainter corbels, an old-fashioned oriel window here, and a bay in another portion, gave the entire mass a look of weird and

rugged antiquity, while the more modern devices of balconies and verandas, plate-glass windows, the new gravel-paths and bright flower-beds, gave it an appearance as if some ancient and weather-beaten rock had gathered a young and thriving population at its base, and was being studded with villages and cornfields. It was well worthy of inspection, and the impression produced upon the visitor, who, by a sudden bend of the carriage road, found himself in full view of Genthorpe, was not easily forgotten.

"We are not the only visitors, apparently," said Lord Ryan, noticing a smart dog-cart at the door.

"My instinct tells me that belongs to my worthy colleague, Steele. He is the last man in the world I desire to see," said Overdon, "and I find it necessary to inspect the grounds."

"Nonsense," said Lord Ryan. "You must come in with me. Come and look at the carvings."

"I have admired all the wood-carvings, all the stone-work, and all the sculpture many times over. I was enthusiastic ten years ago. I could not be so again, especially in the presence of Steele. You know it is my principle to go through life without unpleasantness. Steele to me is unpleasant. If it be he, I shall vanish."

The Radical member for Thamestone, who had occupied much of his time in trying to discover at

what exact point the lines of pleasure and of duty coincided, reluctantly followed, while Lord Ryan crossed the lawn and entered the spacious oaken vestibule of Genthorpe. An elderly gentleman, of somewhat pompous exterior and old-fashioned attire, and whose neck was enveloped in an ample white kerchief, welcomed them with respectful familiarity.

"So it has come at last, Mr. Sutton."

"It has," said that gentleman, gravely shaking his head. "Unfortunately, it has; though I never thought it."

"I did," said Lord Ryan; "and really I wonder now it did not come sooner."

"That's exactly what Lord Burgos says," replied Mr. Sutton, with a sigh. "But I can't see it."

"There's no need for you to see it," said Overdon. "Come over to the Cottage on the day of sale."

"What, sir?" asked Mr. Sutton, indignantly pulling up his neckcloth. "Would you have me fly at the hour of danger, and abandon this place to the rabble?"

"I should scarcely have expected the rabble to come here," said Lord Ryan, smiling.

"Can you tell me where the rabble does not come now-a-days, my lord?"

"I am afraid it would be a very long list, Mr. Sutton."

"No, sir. The rabble has invaded every inch of the country. Scarcely anything is sacred to them."

"Which I take to be a vast improvement in the national mind," said Overdon lightly.

"Your iconoclastic views, I am sorry to say, are too well known, sir," answered Mr. Sutton severely.

"But I must confess," added Lord Ryan, "that I agree with my brother. In my travels I have found the most idolatrous tribes possessing the greatest number of sacred places and things. Remember, Mr. Sutton, the chosen people had only one Holy of Holies, where no one could enter, and that was small."

"And we are getting worse than they," answered the steward of Genthorpe, with warmth, "for we were the chosen people; we have overrun the Holy of Holies, and are setting up our golden calves everywhere."

"That reminds me that we come to look at the graven images," said Overdon.

"The statuary? I know you are a great collector, Lord Ryan; but you'll have to look sharp. It is much admired, and may be sold by private contract."

"To some of the rabble, I suppose," said Overdon.

"Yes; to some infernal cotton-lord or iron-master, like the one up-stairs."

"A ponderous man, with dull eyes, a heavy voice, and the name of Steele."

"Yes, that is the man."

"My dear Sutton, you include Sir Richard Steele among the rabble?"

"He is an iron-man of some sort," responded Sutton sulkily.

"Consult Burke, my dear sir. When Steele was knighted, it was discovered that his family had been yeomen, or ploughmen, or something of that sort, for centuries. He is positively tremendous. I find it necessary to see the images."

At the sound of leaden footsteps, Overdon slipped across the vestibule, and disappeared through one of the doors, almost as the iron-man entered and approached them.

"I was just saying, Sir Richard," said Lord Ryan courteously, "that you will probably look at some of the iron-work and wood-carving here with admiration."

"Yes," answered the knight, coolly, "there are some fine things. But the best are modern."

"Modern!" said Mr. Sutton, brusquely. "There is nothing modern about this Hall."

"Indeed," answered Sir Richard, regarding him from head to foot. "I should say not much."

"I defy anyone to point out anything more modern than the Wars of the Roses."

"That will do for the auctioneer, Mr. Sutton, but you'll scarcely get us to believe it."

"You are probably not much of an antiquarian," said Lord Ryan mildly.

"No, I find the present time quite enough for me. But I know enough for that."

"Mr. Steele," said the steward with all his pomp, "you insult this ancient building by your doubts. Genthorpe has been for centuries the home of the Plantagenets."

"It is a pity," retorted that gentleman, turning slowly to the door, "that lately it should have been the home of fanatics."

Mr. Sutton threw a glance of intense indignation at the wealthy member of the rabble, and strode out of the vestibule. Lord Ryan, who had been considerably amused by this passage of arms, turned to the knight.

"You have wounded Mr. Sutton in his weakest point, Sir Richard."

"The man is intolerable. I hope he is not a fixture in the place."

"Scarcely—although a most admirable steward. *Que voulez-vous?* This is his crotchet. Though never of great means, he is undoubtedly of old family. He has spent his lifetime in searching the Genthorpe and other archives in the hope of proving

that he is descended from the Plantagenets. It is a harmless fancy, and amuses him."

"I can't say it amuses me. By-the-bye, I am afraid——"

"If it is anything about to-night, Sir Richard, I won't hear it. I hold you to your promise."

"I had thought that it might perhaps be postponed with advantage to some quieter time.

"By no means. I have set my heart on it, and you'll be supported by your colleague, my brother-in-law, and by Lord Burgos, and myself for certain."

"Very well. The scheme always had my warmest approval, and I am sorry the club will be opened under such unpleasant auspices."

"I don't altogether understand you," said Lord Ryan.

"I have a quarrel with my men at present. They are going to turn out, I'm afraid, and we shall be as unsettled here as elsewhere. I had to refuse a large contract this morning, which has gone to Belgium."

"Unfortunately these things will come occasionally, Sir Richard."

"It really seems as if everything is thrown away upon these men," said the employer.

"Not at all. We must teach them sounder views, that's all," said the nobleman.

"In the meantime," replied the other gloomily,

"it seems to me a miserable look-out for this country. I don't know what we are coming to. Work is nearly at a standstill in the briskest part of the year; and the air is full of agitation. No sooner is one strike ended than another begins. London is talking of nothing but demonstrations, processions, and petitions. In Lancashire they are following the lead, and in Staffordshire they have begun rioting."

"So much the more reason," said Lord Ryan cheerily, "why we should make Thamestone a model of order and prosperity. The remedy, I believe, is persistent kindness and goodwill."

"I am afraid not," said the ironfounder, shaking his head; "but I shall always be ready to join in any legitimate effort at reconciliation."

"And I am convinced that a working-man's club, with good classes, or lectures on finance and political economy, will do wonders."

"Unless it gets into the hands of demagogues. However, I'll be there at eight. Good-bye."

Lord Ryan, finding himself alone, with measured tread ascended the broad staircase of dark polished oak, and roamed at his leisure from room to room, and from one corridor into another, looking at the various moveable articles that had already been numbered, and taking a note of those that pleased him most.

What a wealth of labour, and art, and industry

had accumulated here and remained idle for generations! There were long rows of portraits, rendered invisible by age and smoke, staring grimly out of their darkened frames; there were huge tapestries, that had grown under the fair fingers of damsels whose knights were following the hawk or wolf; there were huge chimneys, with enough marble or wood carving to furnish a modern mansion. The wainscot was loaded with carving—the very ceilings were filled with it; and in these long and lofty rooms his solitary steps sounded with a gloomy echo. But passing to the right or east wing, Lord Ryan was surprised to find a series of apartments much more modern in style, and some even elegantly furnished. There were cosy bed-rooms running into cosy sitting-rooms, with deep windows and balconies, and a number of comforts of which the Plantagenets surely had no conception. Not remembering ever to have seen these before, and judging them to be Mr. Sutton's private apartments, Lord Ryan hastened through them and passed by a back-stair into the private grounds.

Here, too, the same conscientious care was apparent at every step. The broad terrace was scrupulously clean; the flower-beds looked neat and prim; the surrounding grass was as soft and close-cut as velvet; and the fountains had been set going for the day. The statues alone seemed to

have been neglected, and it was these Lord Ryan had specially come to see. He remarked with some regret that several very fine groups and figures had been seriously damaged. It was very evident that they had been hastily cleaned and numbered, and it was doubtful whether some Achilles or wood-nymph had not lost a missing limb under the operation. As he followed the path he involuntarily turned into an arbour, and found himself face to face with a group which certainly presented a very odd contrast.

On an old moss-covered pedestal stood a statue upon which succeeding years had bestowed so much dirt and moss that it was scarcely recognisable. By its side stood a young workman, who was diligently engaged in cleaning the marble, and had restored one of the legs to dazzling whiteness. The workman was dressed in an ordinary linen blouse, with which the rest of his attire was strictly in keeping, and yet when, at Lord Ryan's approach, he lifted his head with a quick gesture, the nobleman saw before him a face of such marked intelligence and looked into a pair of eyes that seemed possessed of so much calmness, that he involuntarily inclined his head. The young workman silently returned the salutation, and continued working.

"Do you think this figure worthy of much attention?" asked Lord Ryan, after he had

watched the nimble and dexterous fingers for some moments.

"It seems to me the headstone rejected by the workmen," said the young man, with another quick look at his interrogator.

"It looks as though it were pretty old," said Lord Ryan, stepping nearer.

"It is of great antiquity. I believe it is pure Greek."

"Indeed!" said Lord Ryan. "Why?"

"Are you a professional, or a connoisseur?" asked the young man.

"I am somewhat of a connoisseur."

"Then see. This leg shows traces of workmanship that was revived by Michel Angelo. And the figure is infinitely older than three hundred years. This has been chiselled by the ancients."

"There is something in what you say," said Lord Ryan; "but how do you explain its whiteness?"

"Easily. It has been coated with some substance impervious to water. When it came here it was covered up and forgotten; consequently it has not suffered."

"It certainly looks like it. What a pity the head should be missing."

"Here it is," said the workman, pointing to something on the earth at their feet.

Lord Ryan seized it with both hands, and dropped it—it was too heavy for him. The workman smiled slightly, and, lifting it with comparative ease, placed it carefully in position.

“Beautiful!” exclaimed Lord Ryan. “That curve of the neck is exquisite. The expression is masterly. This is no work of ordinary hands. I am delighted.”

“When it is quite cleaned,” said the workman, “it will be finer still. Look at the torso.”

“Do you belong to the house, young man?” said Lord Ryan, whose heart had been warmed, and who felt in his pocket for half-a-crown.

“No; I have been sent down by my employer to look at some of these statues.”

“Oh, indeed,” said Lord Ryan, with a strange reluctance. “You come from London?”

“I do. And if you have any intention of buying, I would advise you to look at that relief in the dining-hall chimney-piece. It is quite as good as this.”

“Thank you,” said the nobleman, advancing his hand with the modest portion of a sovereign. “Do you stay here?”

“I shall return to London to-night, for I have done my work,” answered the workman, looking calmly into the other’s eyes, and apparently not noticing the offer.

Lord Ryan coloured slightly, and drew it back.

“Good-day,” said he, lifting his hat by way of tacit apology.

“Good-day,” said the young man, lifting his with a slight bow.

CHAPTER III.

MEN OF THE PAST AND PRESENT.

SOME hours later the young artisan, after having examined the treasures of Genthorpe with careful eyes, returned to the harbour where he had discovered his pearl of great price, much doubting within himself whether it was not his duty, as an honest man, to inform the owners of its probable value before it was put up for sale. His relation with his employer was not of so cordial a nature that he could rejoice for his sake in the making of an unfair bargain, and yet it was clearly his master's interest that he should be silent. While he was debating this question, and examining the head with that minute attention which was to him a labour of love, the sound of approaching voices fell upon his ear, and before he could decide whether they were known to him, the figures of two men darkened the opening of the harbour where he was engaged. He looked up and recognised in the elderly gentleman with the ample, old-fashioned

neckerchief, the steward of Genthorpe, Mr. Launcelot Sutton. From the white hair and carefully-shaved face of the one, his eyes travelled to the heavy brow and the bearded chin of Sir Richard Steele, and with the shadow of a smile that passed across his face, there lay in his eyes a look of recognition, which was unconsciously returned by the great employer.

"I am by no means prepared to say, Sir Richard," said Mr. Sutton, with somewhat more suavity than before, "that some of the matter for sale here may not be found to be of a comparatively modern origin. Why, sir, if you are disposed to split hairs, the flowers in yonder beds are but of yesterday; but the bulk, sir, the great bulk, I maintain, is old, and part of it antique. Do you not believe me? Here is a witness, whose testimony, as that of a professional, must be of some weight with you."

"I don't know that I require any testimony of weight," said Sir Richard, with his usual abruptness, and looking past everything and everybody. "I came back to have another look at that iron gate at the end of the garden."

"And I have come back to correct an erroneous impression," said Mr. Sutton, with quiet gravity. "This young man is a professional in these matters, and I ask him whether the carving and statuary at Genthorpe are not ancient."

"It is very old, as carvings go," answered the young man, who was a professional.

"And," continued Mr. Sutton, with increased politeness, "have you found any that could be called modern?"

"Some of it could be called modern in comparison with the antique."

"No doubt, no doubt. But I am under the impression that I mentioned to my honourable friend here, the War of the Roses as the earliest period."

"Don't remember when that was," said the artisan, with a tinge of malice in his voice, and looking for information to Sir Richard.

The heavy brow grew heavier, and the knight answered impatiently—

"What does it matter, Sutton? Deuce take your War of the Roses."

"The War of the Roses commenced when Richard Duke of York offered armed opposition to his brother, Henry the Sixth, at St. Albans," said Mr. Sutton.

The two men looked at him with a puzzled expression.

"Some," continued Mr. Sutton, pulling up his neckcloth as though he felt in his element, "some are disposed to fix it at an earlier period. But the best authorities agree upon the year 1455."

"That's four hundred years ago," said the artisan, promptly.

"Rather more," added the steward.

"Well, the work here is quite as old as that. And some a good deal older."

"Which, for instance," said Sir Richard, fixing his gloomy eye upon the young man.

"The greater portion of the lower part of the terrace, and some of the garlands of the oak wainscoting in the armoury."

"Pah," exclaimed Sir Richard, with contempt.

"The very thing I looked at with attention. I am convinced the idea is quite modern."

"Very few ideas are," replied the young man calmly; "and in workmanship and condition, at any rate, it is almost identical with some I had to copy in Warwick Castle, and that certainly dates from 1100."

"To copy? Then you don't belong to these auctioneers?"

"I am under the impression that I am not altogether unknown to you, Sir Richard."

"I only know that you belong to that most mischievous Brotherhood of Labour."

"Mischievous? I thought you assisted in incorporating it by Act of Parliament."

"Have you come here for the purpose of stirring up discontent?"

"Here?" repeated the young artisan, looking

around him with his grey eyes full of well-feigned amazement—an amazement which would have been perfect but for the smile that lurked in the corners of his mouth.

“I don’t mean here on this spot. I mean Thamestone, of course,” said Sir Richard.

“I have come straight from London, and I am going straight back.”

“You had better,” growled the iron-founder. “Don’t come messing about in Thamestone.”

“They tell us in London that the workmen in Thamestone don’t want much stirring up. I am told they are pretty discontented as it is,” said the artisan innocently, but watching the effects of his parting shaft.

“They shall find themselves in the wrong box if they think of getting over me,” said Sir Richard, with some vehemence. “You can tell them that. Good-day, Sutton.”

The knight of steel walked away heavily, crushing the grit under him as he went, and leaving the two men to look after him in silence. During this slight controversy the steward had pulled up his collar to the highest point that was compatible with safe breathing, and his face showed alarming symptoms of suppressed delight, which, when Sir Richard was out of hearing, broke out with such violence that no amount of starch could have prevented havoc in his chiefest of ornaments.

"Young man," said Mr. Sutton, still very red in the face, "you had the best of him there."

"You seem to be very pleased, Mr. Sutton," said the other quietly.

"I am very pleased, my lad. You had out and out the best of it, and Sir Richard knows it. I'll tell you what. You have done this thing here," touching the statue, "uncommonly well. I wish you would stay here over-night, and do two or three more. I'll take care that you are very comfortable. We have plenty of room, and—hem—I'll—I'll make it worth your while; I promise you that."

"You are very kind Mr. Sutton; but what I have done I have done for Mr. Mason."

"But can't you go to Mason's place in Thamestone and tell them you are here?"

"I have nothing to do with the place at Thamestone at present. Besides, Mr. Mason couldn't spare me."

"I am very sorry for that—really very sorry—because you seem uncommonly handy at your work. Well, under the circumstances, you will permit me—allow me, eh—to—ah—a very small—eh."

The good old fellow was evidently slightly embarrassed. He fumbled in his waistcoat pocket and at his watch-chain; and at last, taking something out of the former, grasped the young man's

hand firmly, pressed something into it, and turned away hastily to escape. The young artisan's face was divided between amusement and apprehension, and when he looked down and beheld a bright yellow guinea, pierced with a little hole, his cheeks flushed, and, holding the giver back, he asked with a frown—

"What is this, Mr. Sutton? You have made a mistake. I can't take this."

"Oh, yes; you must," said the steward. "Do, now; do. You will pain me if you don't."

"I would pain myself very much more if I did. Would you take a guinea from me, Mr. Sutton?"

"No, that I would not," said the steward, looking up with astonishment.

"And," said the young man, returning his glance with a look of dignity, "as we are standing under a fair and equal sky, can you imagine that we are not equals in all things, except this? Take it back, Mr. Sutton; for if English workmen are sometimes disposed to forget what is due to them, I am not."

"But, my dear sir——" said Mr. Sutton, still reluctant.

"Sir," said the artisan, interrupting him somewhat sternly, "have you no sick friend or poor relation, nobody who has been afflicted, and who could use this?"

"A sick friend—a poor relation?" repeated the

steward, while a troubled expression settled upon his brow. "You are a strange fellow to ask me that."

"Is that so strange? I, being in the full enjoyment of health and strength, refuse your present, and ask you to give it to some one upon whom the hand of affliction rests heavily. There must be some one you know, who has been pushed to the wall in this world, to whom this would be welcome."

"No, no," said Mr. Sutton; "the only relation I ever had in the world is lost to me now. I am not aware that I know anybody in such want; but I am sure you must know a great many."

"I do know a good many," said the young workman quietly; "they are not scarce."

"There, now," continued Mr. Sutton, with a bright face, "I knew it. Now do me the favour to keep this, and give it, for me, to some poor woman, to gladden her heart and mine. Now, can't you stay?"

"It's impossible," returned the workman. "I am late as it is. The last train from Thamestono goes at seven. It takes me two hours along the road, and it is now five. Is there no short cut?"

"Yes, you can go along this path, right through the park, until you come to the railway cutting. Follow the path by the side of it for one mile, then turn through the gate into the fields, and

strike across by the pond and the Herron Farm into the main road. You will gain nearly forty minutes that way."

"Thank you very much. That will give me time to tidy myself a little. My bag, I believe, is at the house, and you can give me some soap and water, I dare say."

Mr. Sutton nodded, and walked on towards Genthorpe in silence. He was puzzled, for although the young man had pocketed his guinea, he had done it with an air that made the giver very sensible of receiving a favour instead of bestowing one. There was something also in the manner in which he had remonstrated with and almost rebuked him, the calm way in which he had looked out of those deep grey eyes, and the self-possession with which he had answered Sir Richard, that puzzled the old-fashioned steward completely. His hands were dirty, his clothes were soiled, his boots were heavy; altogether he was evidently a proletarian, a child of labour, a son of toil. In his days the sons of toil had been clowns, and would not have refused a modest twopence, far less a guinea; nor would they have answered in such pure English and with such quiet self-possession. The Man of the past shook his head as he entered the Hall, and gazed out of the front door. He was disturbed in his reverie by the object of his thoughts, who, having found his way and his wants,

had in a few minutes worked a complete change. His hands were clean, even neat; his hair was brushed; his blouse had made way for a loose coat of black velveteen; and his boots, though still heavy, were polished. He held a small bag in his hand.

"I am going, Mr. Sutton," said he, with a smile, "and I may not return. But I shall let you know what becomes of your present. Good-bye."

"Good-bye," said Mr. Sutton, shaking his hand with some warmth, and looking after him as he vanished between the trees and the sunlight. "I don't understand it," he muttered, pacing the terrace.

No wonder. In all the glorious annals of the Plantagenets, the sons of toil had been somehow left out.

CHAPTER IV.

A STORM-BIRD.

THE young artisan strode forth through the park with firm step and with the keen sense of pleasure of one whose work for the day is done, and who can set his face homeward with an easy conscience. He followed the steward's directions mechanically, and having arrived at that portion of the park where it was intersected by the United Empire Railway Company's main line, he turned through the stile and followed the narrow footpath that skirted the top of the broad cutting.

After having continued for some distance, with a smile upon his lips, and busy with his own thoughts, his attention was attracted by the fact that the footpath ended rather abruptly, and was continued with some indecision on the other side of a second stile. Ignorant of the fact that he had already passed a good many on his way, he concluded that this must be the path through the meadows alluded to by Mr. Sutton, and followed it

without a further thought. It was only when he had gone for more than a mile that he discovered himself abroad. The path, which was of an undemonstrative character, suddenly split itself up into four feeble continuations. There was no pond within sight, and nothing approaching to a farm. Nothing but green fields beneath and a blue sky above him, with fragrant hawthorn hedges and clustering trees around. But for these the young artisan evidently had no eyes.

His love of nature was absorbed by a love for something more natural, which made him cast his glance somewhat impatiently past these things, until it rested upon the telegraph poles which could be faintly distinguished in the distance, and which, no doubt, marked the course of the railway. To these the pedestrian directed his steps, judging that, no doubt, the course of civilisation would take a tolerably direct road to the city of Thamestone, for which he was bound.

The railway was soon reached, and although it was apparent that civilisation, in approaching Thamestone, had been obliged to adopt many a curve, it was obviously at present the only safe guide. The young artisan, therefore, stepped out with redoubled vigour, somewhat annoyed at having lost his way, when he was brought to a sudden standstill by a voice which addressed him as "guvnor," and desired to be informed what

he was "a-doing of." He looked up and found himself almost in front of a signal-box, half concealed by a tree and a bend in the cutting. The person addressing him had been endowed with much ugliness, but as his eyes had assumed a squint that took in a good many points of the compass, the want of beauty was more grotesque than painful.

"Do you know that you are a-tresparsing yere, guvnor?" said the signal-man, with a gruff voice.

"I have lost my way to Thamestone, and I am following the railway. I suppose that will bring me there, some time?"

"Thamestone?" said the owner of the squint, with a liberal use of that faculty. "You're a-following the railroad for Thamestone? Why, that's ever so fur."

"Never mind the distance; I am a pretty good walker, Petrel."

"Bligh me!" exclaimed he in the box, grinning from ear to ear with apparent ease; "who'd a thought of seeing you here?"

"I certainly did not expect to run up against you," said the artisan.

"Warren, my boy," said the other, reaching an immense brawny hand out of his box and shaking the young man's heartily, "I have not been so out-and-out delighted for many's the day. Your face is as welcome as the harvest

moon. Lor, who'd a thought of seeing *you* here?"

"I must be somewhere, you know," said the artisan, with a smile.

"To think of the time we spent together in Paris, and the things we have seen together; and you a-coming up here in this permiscuous way. It ain't credible. Who'd a thought of seeing you *here*?"

"And that trespassing too," said the young man, who seemed greatly amused by the absolute astonishment into which the other had been thrown.

"Oh, that don't matter," said Petrel, with a dreadfully knowing wink. "That ain't so bad. I was a talking gruff, 'cause I thought you was a parson cove."

"Are parsons in this part of the country particularly forbidden to trespass?"

"Why, they are at it all day long, they are; that's why," said Petrel.

"Indeed!" said the young workman, with a slight smile; "how's that?"

"Why, they're a trespassin on your fields and glebes that ought to belong to the people by rights, ain't they? And they're a trespassin upon your patience from early morning till late at night. And ain't your patience as good as a piece of this yere dumb land?"

"In what way have they been trespassing on your patience, down here?"

"They're at it all over the country, I tell you. It's time they was converted."

"But what have they been up to here?" asked the young man.

"Up to," answered the signalman, giving a confidential leer round the corner; "what do you think of a white-neckclothed cove as refuses to give a little gal a Christian burial in the legal cemetary—cause why—she don't belong to his church? That's all."

"Has that happened here?" asked the artisan.

"That's happened yere," returned Petrel; "and she was the prettiest little gal in the world. Why, Warren, she was not more than five year old, and she used for to sit on my knee and say her cattychism and her litle hymnses, she did, as neat as the parson hisself; and just 'cause she did not happen to have been baptised, he refuses her a last restin'-place."

"Well, I suppose you had to put up with it, and go to another cemetery?"

"Go to another cemetery, which is three mile off, and that means a poor man's wages for another day," said he of the railway, with a scowl. "Look'ee here, Warren," continued he, doggedly, fetching a huge gold watch and chain of antiquated pattern somewhere out of an obscure

and profound pocket. "Look'ee here, Warren, I'd give this yere little friend to have a good fling at them all round. I would that. Bligh me."

"You have not changed much in these ten years, Petrello," said the artisan, seriously.

"Changed!" returned Petrel. "What have I had to change me, I should like to know? I was copped in Paris just after you saw me last, and put in prison, by Pietri. What for I don't know. I helped a young lady, with two of my mates, out of some villain's hands, and she gave me this watch. And then I was hunted, and took up, and thrown into quod, though I managed to escape and get to England. But if it had not been for this yere little friend I would have starved, I would, afore I got this berth. And what is it, after all? Four-and-twenty shillins a week, and I've been here three-and-twenty hours this day."

"Is your mate ill?" asked the artisan.

"It's him as has lost the babby. And he has had such a lot of worry and bother that he's quite upset, and down with the fever. And no wonder, for it was a reg'lar little beauty, it was; and for them to refuse to give it as much as a decent Christian burial, as if it was a dead kitten instead of a beautiful little babby. Ne'er mind; we'll have 'em some day."

"Petrello," said the young man gravely, "do

you remember what I said on that day in Paris when you fellows were all for barricades and revolution?"

"Yes, I remember what you said. You said as how if we'd been as well together in the law courts as we was at the barricades we would have gained a great victory, instead of bein' licked."

"And I say it again, Petrello," said the other. "Our strength is so overwhelming that we can only lose by flying to swords and bayonets. If that parson was illegal in refusing to bury the baby, you fellows could easily have prosecuted him, and vindicated the law. If he was legal we must get the law altered."

"That's all very well," said Petrel. "You can always talk uncommon fine, Warren; but they tell me you have grown mighty friendly with the high 'uns lately."

"Whoever said so was wrong," said Warren, decidedly. "I wish to God we could be friendly. But there's too much fighting to be done yet before peace can come."

"Fightin'!" said the signalman, with brightening face. "Are they thinking of it in London? Tip us the wink, Warren; bligh me, tip us the wink; and I'll find you half a dozen stout fellows to have a fling at the high 'uns. And, I say, if you want this yere little friend, you know, you're welcome."

"No, Petrello," answered the young artisan, shaking his head; "God forbid it should ever come to that. But I must hurry on to Thamestone, though I am afraid the London train is gone."

"It's just been signalled. You'll see it pass here in a few minutes."

"Never mind. I may find some other conveyance. Good-bye. You know where to find me—at Mason's."

"Follow this footpath. It'll take you into the main road," said Petrel, shaking hands with fervour. "And I say, Warren, my boy, if they are going to have a fling at the high 'uns you'll tip, won't you?"

CHAPTER V.

THAMESTONE.

IF, in the days when the daughters of men were loved by the sons of heaven, one of the immortals had pursued his love through the smiling fields and laughing woods of Thamesshire, and had suddenly found himself in one of the streets of Thamestone, and the fair object of his desire changed into the likeness of a Thamestone lass, he would have lifted his eyes to his native sky with a shudder, and wondered to what depths the children of men could have sunk, to raise and tolerate upon so fair an earth so foul a blot. He would have hidden his face and fled, fearing lest he might be contaminated by so much ugliness and dirt, for Thamestone was uncomely, and Thamestone was unclean with an exceeding great uncleanness.

Squalid and old, with ages of dirt upon many walls, and years of refuse rotting in many yards, it looked in some places as if it were the creation of a species of mud-coral, for in truth there were

dilapidated tenements and fantastic shapes enough to resemble the jagged arms of a reef. There were houses whose withered skeletons of wood, barely filled in with crumbling clay, tottered upon supports that were themselves decaying. There were others leaning forward, and sideward, and backward, as if they had become utterly reckless of personal appearance, and were justified by their great age in taking such liberties; others, again, like old hags crouching over a fire, craned a first and second floor over the pavement, as if they would see what was going on below.

Others, again, were square blocks of brick, substantial enough and solid, but in other respects the worthy offspring of such parents. Through the lead-cased windows of the former it was possible to obtain a glimpse of a lofty ceiling, decorated more or less elaborately, and reminding one of the days when men lived with more leisure, and when their leisure was more devoted to things of beauty and taste; when there was pure air in the rooms and flowers upon the window sills; when there was laughter and honest frolic in the streets.

There was none of that now in the streets of Thamestone. The men passed silently to their work, or at most saluted their comrades with a grunt. They disappeared in dirty passages, or turned down dark lanes that led to muddy water-

side wharves, from whence they issued begrimed and blackened, walking with heavy gait and a somewhat downcast look. For the men of Thamestone were dull, and they turned into dull and dirty houses, from whence the uncomfortable smell of soapsuds, the unlovely sound of squalling children, or the voices of fighting women, frightened and withheld all other men.

Or they stood in groups by the taverns in the High-street, rubbing their dirty backs against the doorposts, and making the walls re-echo their coarse jests and beery laughter. Verily he that was new to these things, and entered the town, must have been bewildered and amazed. This a thriving and rising centre of industry? this a prosperous town? Where was the sun, the parent of light, life, and health? Where was health itself? where gaiety? Where was anything that reminds men of the trees, the woods, the fields, and all glorious Nature, given to him to enjoy?

Lord Ryan, who drove through the High-street on his way to the Rectory, had seen this state of things often enough, and, as a man of taste, it was to him an eyesore. As the principal landlord of the city, it was to him specially, something alarming; but it would have been a great deal more alarming if it had paid him less. As a philanthropist also it was painful to him, but the pain was mixed with a gentle thankfulness that matters

might have been worse in the hands of a less conscientious man. For Lord Ryan in his own way had worked much and honestly for the bettering of Thamestone. He had devised numerous schemes for the amelioration of the working classes ; and although they had more or less failed, he could honestly say that the fault lay neither in his plans nor in himself nor in those who assisted him. The real cause lay in the strangely apathetic and stubborn nature of the men who dwelt in these dark regions.

How long had he not endeavoured to start the plan which had at last come to maturity ! What trouble had he not taken to induce the men to assist him in getting up a Working Man's College, with instructive lectures and good wholesome entertainments ! And to what purpose ? He paid all expenses : the men came once and then stayed away. And even now, when he had given a valuable piece of ground at a peppercorn rental, when he had given one-half and advanced the other half of the sum required to build the Working Men's Club, it was with the utmost difficulty that subscribers and members could be got, although an honorary committee, headed by Lord Burgos, Sir Richard Steele, and himself, the great nobleman, the great employer, and the great landlord of the neighbourhood, had accepted all responsibility. A sufficient number of members

had, indeed, been got together, but subscriptions came in slowly; the men remained sulky, and the club was evidently unpopular.

This, however, Lord Ryan cheerfully hoped to outlive. The building was handsome and roomy, and as the formal opening was to take place that evening, he looked forward to the ceremony with that amount of pleasure which a modest man feels when he anticipates due praise. So Lord Ryan drove slowly through the High Street, and returned a gracious and kindly salute to all who chose to touch their hats to him, though the manner of it was often not very complimentary. As he turned from the High Street into the New Road the nobleman's glance once more rested with pride and satisfaction on the new red brick building at the corner; and as the carriage rolled gently by, a thought passed through him that this might mark the commencement of a new era in the history of the city, as the building itself was the commencement of a new town.

It was surely not for want of example that the lower portion of Thamestone was in such bad condition, for the New Road, leading for nearly a mile straight out of the town, was handsome and spacious. There were on both sides snug little cottages, fronted by snug little gardens; there were handsome villas, with imposing porticoes and bulging windows; there were mansions of dazzling

height and serene aspect, with carriage drives and glimpses of livery; there were smooth croquet lawns visible between the houses on one side, and there was a park-like shrubbery on the other, which was kept up by the favoured inhabitants with exquisite care. There was no want of drainage here. There was not a vestige of rubbish or refuse to be seen even close to the sewer grating. Everything looked as prim and neat as a street built with toy-houses, and it was grateful to the eye to find a befitting climax in the new parish church, which had been erected, doubtless for the convenience of the parishioners, at the extremest end of the parish, on the highest point of the new road, and by the side of the elegant mansion which the rector, William Laud, D.D., had providentially inherited.

The new parish church was a splendid building. It was admitted by connoisseurs to be a masterpiece of squareness; there was scarcely a stone that did not convey some symbol, and the architect had been highly complimented on the suggestive manner in which he had finished the tower, with a thin and tapering pinnacle at each of the four corners. Dr. Laud had remarked at the opening that it was *very* suggestive, to which Charles Overdon had cheerfully assented, but had asked, with some hesitation, "Suggestive—what of?"

"What of?" Dr. Laud answered in his own

sharp manner. "Why the Trinity and the Church, of course."

"Oh yes, of course," Overdon had answered, meekly. "I thought, perhaps, you meant of a four-poster."

Notwithstanding which, Dr. Laud was quite as pleased with his church as he was with his Rectory, although the latter, as a building, was even handsomer. It was evidently expensive, and was reported to have cost the late owner, Mrs. Land's father, that unknown quantity, "a heap of money." There was unmistakable style about it, and what with the addition of a double coach-house, a large conservatory and several hothouses, the Rector and his family managed to prepare themselves for better things with tolerable comfort. As for himself, nobody had ever seen the Rector in anything but a white-heat of activity and zeal.

Dr. Laud was possessed of a pious frenzy that left him no rest. He was by far the most hard-working, energetic man in the diocese. There was not a church movement of any note in which his name did not conspicuously appear, and to have had an hour's discussion with him was supposed to be quite as pleasant and wholesome as to be mentally curry-combed for that period. The Rector was not only an active, he was also a learned man; he possessed a power of argument for which he would have found no vent, had he not

accepted the editorship of the most withering Church paper in the kingdom. He prided himself much on the correctness of his political views.

The confidential adviser of a bishop, whose abundance of charity, but for him, might have seriously compromised the Church, it was somewhat strange that Dr. Laud had more than once refused a bishopric; yet considering that, as the younger son of a wealthy earl, he had received a handsome fortune, had married the only child of a rich manufacturer, and held two fat livings, and would have lost a considerable amount of influence and nearly all his independence by that change, there was some sense in his refusing, on the ground that he meant to be a pillar of the Church and not one of the towers.

Lord Ryan had much admiration for the man—an admiration which had begun when they were boys at Eton. As he seldom remained in Thamestone for several hours without going to the Rectory, he was treated almost as a member of the family. The stable-gates opened of their own accord as the carriage approached, and the manservant at the door gave him “good afternoon” with respectful familiarity as he assisted him to alight, and relieved him of hat and cane in the hall.

“The Doctor is in the library, with Mr. Charles Overdon,” said the servant respectfully, with his hand on the door.

Lord Ryan nodded, and passed into the library. The lawyer was comfortably buried in an arm-chair, and evidently amused. Dr. Laud, a slender man, with dark and brilliant eyes, was pacing up and down, and evidently in dudgeon.

"How long have you two been together alone without exploding?" asked Lord Ryan with a laugh.

"Not more than five minutes, upon my honour," said Overdon, with that mild air which he knew to be most provoking to his old school-fellow; "and I am afraid I have unwittingly caused several detonations since."

"It is inexplicable to me," said Laud, pausing in front of Lord Ryan and shaking hands without paying much attention, "that a man can have attained to this age without having learned at least the rudimentary lessons of life. Here is this brother of yours, Ryan, who has just returned from his tour of inspection in the States, and who has not come back disgusted with republicanism and all its corruption. I don't understand it."

"I don't understand it myself," said Overdon meekly. "I went out fully intending to be disgusted, but somehow it has not come off. I admit that I saw corruption enough, but then that don't disgust a man at my age any longer. It might have done at Eton, but not after my education was finished."

"And you don't feel ashamed of speaking in those terms of unmeasured praise about a country without adequate respect for the law, without a national policy, without national life, without a national religion?"

"I judged the people by their looks," answered the lawyer. "They were, no doubt, very foolish in looking content and prosperous without all that, but I give you my word they did. The only persons whom I found in a chronic state of discontent were the ministers of the Episcopal Church."

"They are much to be pitied," said the Rector feelingly, and looking at Lord Ryan, who silently enjoyed a conflict between these two. "They have not the strength to take up a lofty and uncompromising position, and they are gradually losing their hold upon the people."

"You are quite right," said Overdon. "I am glad we agree in this, at least. They are clever enough to see that the days of priest-rule are over for them; but they pity you more than you pity them."

"Pity us!" exclaimed the Rector, frowning darkly; "why should they pity us?"

"I asked them the same question," answered Overdon meekly, "for I frankly confess I did not expect to meet with that feeling out of England. But they know that whereas it is given to them to adapt themselves to altered circumstances and

regain their hold upon the people, you are prevented from doing so by the very terms of your establishment, and are thus in danger of becoming that most contemptible of all things, a withered and effete institution. Strange, is it not?"

"Very strange," said Laud, with a flush in his cheeks; "and strangest of all, Charles, that you should repeat this with such evident pleasure. I am firmly convinced that at no period of her history—and that history has been checkered enough, forsooth—has the Church enjoyed so much power and so much influence as now."

"No doubt it has, with a section of the community," said the lawyer, "but not with the people."

"Yes, with the people!" cried the clergyman with warmth; "with the better portion of them, at least."

"The better portion! And pray which is that? I maintain that with the poor—the labouring classes—your influence is gone. Do you mean to tell me that you possess one tithe of the power wielded by such men as Harrick?"

"Bah! You don't mean to compare me to an ignorant and hot-headed demagogue?"

"Call him what you like—I call him an Apostle of Labour, and one who is honoured in his own country. A man whose words are read eagerly by thousands, where yours are passed by."

"And what does that prove? The Church has ever stood above all parties—like a city set on a hill."

"There are those," said Overdon, laughing, "who consider she is the city set on seven hills."

"The Church," continued Dr. Laud sternly, "has always occupied a sublime and lofty position above parties; and it stands to reason that the specious advocate of interests and the ranter on grievances will make a greater momentary stir. But I confess I am ashamed and humiliated that a representative of an illustrious profession should have drawn a comparison between us and a set of drunken and noisy rebels."

"Now, preserve us, ye angels of mercy!" cried Overdon with mock humility, holding up his hands. "I mentioned one man, whom I ventured to call an Apostle of Labour; you talk of a set of drunken and noisy rebels. I am not aware that Harrick is either drunken or noisy."

"Then he must be lazy," said the Rector with emphasis.

"I never heard that he was particularly so," replied Overdon.

"You evidently know very little about him," said the Rector.

"I have met him occasionally at the open meeting of delegates, and he has been to me twice to get my opinion on a legal question, and I have

been most favourably impressed by him. That's all."

"That's very little," said the Rector; "and, coming from a partisan, worth nothing. If you were to examine that man's life you would probably find him a very dubious character. But the evening is closing, and we must prepare to go. My wife being away, I am bachelor. I expect both of you here to supper, of course."

"Of course not," said Lord Ryan, who was sitting in the open window, and had lit a cigarette. "I have arranged for all of us to go down to the Cottage to-night. My daughter will be there."

"Oh, I am delighted to hear of her return," said Laud. "She will be at the club to-night, of course?"

"I begged very hard," said Lord Ryan, "but I could not get her to do more than come to the Cottage."

"It would have been very suitable, as she laid the foundation-stone," said the Rector.

"It would have been appropriate," answered her father; "but she did not seem at all inclined."

"I can't help thinking that her seclusion at Beecham can do her no good," said Overdon.

"I thought so at one time," said the nobleman; "but she seems happiest there, and her letters have improved vastly."

"Then I suppose she will remain at the Cottage for some time," said the Rector.

"Till the recess is over—next Monday. And I would have been so glad if Mrs. Laud could have been at our dinner party to-morrow. Lady Burgos is there already, I think; and so, of course, is Mrs. Overdon?"

"Mrs. Laud was reluctantly compelled to visit her invalid sister. Will you drive down, or shall I?"

"There will be room for all of us in my carriage," said Lord Ryan. "Had we not better go now?"

"Yes. I daresay the others are there; and we should not keep them waiting—I never do," said the clergyman.

"By-the-bye," said Overdon, with a grave air, "I wonder whether they will know us."

"Who?" asked Laud, in a cool tone.

"Why, our worthy audience. I have not shown myself to them at the last two elections, and I am afraid they have forgotten me. I hope they know you better."

"I am proud to say," said the Rector, coolly, "that there is not a man in Thamestone who does not know me better and respect me more than you do."

"I am glad of that. I shall find it necessary to look after them a little. But then you are a magistrate."

"I am. And I assure you I find it no very easy work."

"Indeed! Beginning to discover that law is more difficult than theology?"

"No, not that; but with such people as live here we find it extremely difficult to deal. And it would be utterly impossible if we were not supported by such men as Lord Ryan and Lord Burgos, who join great influence to great knowledge of character. You, my dear Charles, probably know more about the North American Indians."

"I wish I did know more about them," replied Overdon, carelessly, "for, on the whole, I prefer them."

CHAPTER VI.

THAMESTONIANS.

CONSIDERED as a building, the Thamestone Working Men's Club and Institute was certainly a success. It has already been said that it was erected on a plot of ground which marked the division between the dirty portion and the clean portion of the town. It might almost be said to mark the division between Labour and Capital. There were comparatively few inhabitants who did not belong to one or the other class; and everybody, therefore, was to be congratulated on the fact that such a site had been obtained for an undertaking in which Capital and Labour might be said to have met. The result, as may be imagined, expressed in brick and mortar, was something striking. Looked at from one side, it wore the aspect of a regenerated pot-house; looked at from another, it seemed to appear like a worldly-minded chapel. Lord Ryan and some of his friends were privately delighted with a third side, fronting the road, and which

had struck the happy medium between a museum and a jail, although neither the spacious entrance nor the large windows agreed with either.

The daylight had scarcely faded out of the sky; the new premises were lighted up from garret to cellar, and presented a very brilliant appearance. The street was filled with groups of men and women who had seen it grow under the builder's hands, many of whom had been engaged in producing part of the material, but who had as yet declined to have anything to do with it. The members and their friends, on the other hand, came in singly or in pairs, and passed into the hall blazing with light, some with a strange shame-facedness that ill suited their stout limbs and broad shoulders; others with a silent and mournful air, as if they were going to perform a painful but necessary duty; while some paused on the threshold to throw a last, long, lingering look at the more genial and convivial tavern hard by.

Yet, to a cultivated man it was pleasant inside. There was a spacious billiard and smoking-room; a reading-room, fitted with a brilliant sun-light and liberally supplied with papers and magazines; there were tea-rooms and coffee-rooms; there was a chess-room; and, above all, there was the noble lecture-room calculated to hold over five hundred people. It had been slightly decorated for the occasion, and a platform erected at one end, with

a table and a row of chairs for the benefit of the noble and reverend patrons. It had also been arranged that the volunteer brass band should attend to lend harmony to the evening; but at the last moment the band refused to go, and there was consequently an air of suppressed solemnity in the room. The members entered quietly and sat down, much as they might have done in a chapel where last-year's pew-rent remained unpaid; and as they took their seats and began a buzzing conversation with their neighbours, they were careful not to allow their voices to exceed a respectable hum.

It was a study to the man with an eye for character, and young Harry Mivor, the reporter of the "Weathercock" national newspaper, who had been sent down as "special," and who prided himself on being somewhat of a student in character, was highly interested in scanning the different faces, and being coached up by a colleague of the local press. For it was evident to Mr. Mivor, that there was a divided spirit in the room. The majority of the men wore a subdued, not to say sulky appearance, and seemed to partially regret their presence on the occasion. But the two foremost rows of chairs presented a totally different aspect. Here, evidently, were congregated the leaders of the movement, the men who had carried it through, and whose faces beamed with mild satisfaction.

There was, for instance, Mr. Tode, the chairman of the working men's committee, who had worked hard for it, and who looked as though he would have been perfectly happy if somebody could have relieved him of a large scroll which he kept changing from hand to hand. Then there was Mr. Prone, another influential member of the same committee, who had put on a clean shirt for the occasion, and was loud in his praises of the decorations.

There were a dozen chairs set apart for ladies, three of which only were filled by Mrs. Sawder and her two blooming daughters, the wives of the members not having put in an appearance. The Rev. Mr. Sawder, the Independent minister, who was one of the esteemed patrons, and whose place by rights was in the little private room, had preferred to remain outside, and was the centre of a small group between the audience and the platform, from whence alone something like articulate sounds proceeded. But then Mr. Sawder was a politic man. He knew his exact position between aristocracy and democracy; and he thought it wiser to play first fiddle to young Mr. Steele and the leading grocer and haberdasher of Thamestone, than to play second fiddle to Dr. Laud.

All this young Mivor beheld at a glance and understood, and having deliberately sharpened his pencil, added to the florid description of the building that "the platform was filled with the

most influential persons of the city, including the Rev. Josiah Sawder, &c., &c. The noble lecture-room, which had been handsomely decorated for the occasion, was crowded by the members and their friends, who seemed thoroughly to appreciate the boon conferred upon them by the noble donor, and testified to the same throughout the evening by their enthusiastic behaviour. The chair was taken at nine o'clock by the mayor, Sir Richard Steele, M.P."

Indeed, the door of the little private room had opened, and the patrons came forth to their seats on the platform, Sir Richard slowly dropping into the centre chair. Some slight disappointment was for one instant manifested at the fact that Lord Ryan himself did not occupy this position, for there was no doubt that he was the most popular man on the platform; but it appeared to have been all previously arranged, and the bulk of the audience did not seem to care much who took upon himself the direction of the proceedings.

There was a feeble applause, and still feebler shuffling with feet, when the mayor rose. He was not a popular man was the mayor, although at one time people had said that he was becoming so; but he was one of those men who always command a hearing and respect. Steele was a great deal too blunt, abrupt, and straightforward ever to become popular; but he had the reputation of

being a very fair man, one who had seen something of labour himself, and who had never taken an advantage of any man. But he had no conception of hiding the truth when he thought it should be said. As he got up it was evident that he recognised the faces of many with whom he was at present in dispute; but the fact, instead of angering him, seemed to put him, and consequently them, in better humour.

After explaining that his two noble colleagues on the right and left had pressed him to take the chair, and that he hoped the meeting would endorse their choice, he continued by frankly expressing his satisfaction that there was at least one spot in the city where, in the present disturbed and unsatisfactory state of affairs, they could all meet as on neutral ground, and leave the vexed question of wages and work on the other side of the threshold. He could not but remember the days of his youth, when the city was small, its industry insignificant, and the working men in a very different position. Now, compared with then, it was almost splendid, and they certainly had much to be thankful for. Much was being done everywhere for the improvement of the world, and much was continually being done for their improvement; and he believed he was expressing the feelings of the meeting when he tendered his thanks to their liberal landlord and donor, Lord

Ryan, but for whose help the present building would not have existed. It was his sincere hope that the club would be a success, that the members would find a reasonable and rational enjoyment, and an opportunity to improve their minds; and he would now call upon Mr. Tode to read the address.

Mr. Tode, amidst the furious applause of the two front rows, and the sulky shuffling of the rest, rose solemnly, and with a sigh of relief unravelled the scroll, which was the result of a long and languishing subscription, and on which, amidst gorgeous emblazonment, it was written, "To the Right Honourable Arthur Voyson, twelfth Baron Ryan of the United Kingdom, G.C.B., D.C.L., M.A., J.P., Member of Her Majesty's Most Honourable Privy Council, Deputy-Lieutenant of Thameshire," and so forth, "might it please his Lordship—they, the undersigned Committee and Members of the Thamestone Working Men's Club, desired to express their deep obligation to his Lordship in having kindly consented to give a lease of the ground of these premises at a nominal rental, and assisting them in erecting the handsome club building;" the wording of the address, which continued to express all sorts of hopes and confidences, being somewhat elevated, Mr. Tode at the conclusion went over the same ground in homelier language for the benefit of those around and behind him. When he

sat down there was the same furious applause of the front rows, but as to the rest of the audience even the shuffling of feet had now ceased; and the two hundred and odd members who had taken seats, and the fifty or sixty who were standing in the remaining space, preserved a sulky silence, and the growing tameness of the whole affair was evidently having a depressing effect on the platform.

Charles Overdon, who was seldom given to depression, whispered a few words into his brother's ear, that he was beginning to feel very low, when just at that moment his attention became fixed upon the door at the further end, where amidst the group of loungers he seemed to behold an acquaintance. A mischievous smile played on his lips, and there was a twinkle in his eye, as Mr. Prone, the foreman of Steele's ironworks, rose, and under the pretence of seconding Mr. Tode, commenced to repeat pretty well what had already been said.

Mr. Prone being a bad speaker, and making much use of the third vowel, sat down amidst complete silence, and it became Lord Ryan's duty to rise and acknowledge the address, and the compliments therein contained. On any other occasion the amiable nobleman would have felt happy in thus responding, and even now he forced himself into an appearance of pleasance, but it was too palpable that the thing was a failure; it was too evident that the bulk of the members were utterly indifferent,

and if anything, hostile ; and although Lord Ryan spoke quietly, and tried to speak good-humouredly, Overdon knew by the tremor of his voice that the disappointment had hurt him very deeply, and that he was utterly disgusted.

Nevertheless, he spoke well, though briefly. In a few appropriate words he thanked the authors of the address for their kind sentiments, and expressed a hope that the building would please them as much in the long run as it had pleased him that evening. He knew that the plan had not always been popular, and that even now it seemed to be received rather coldly. But he hoped that any difficulty might be cleared out of the way, and if there was any person in the room who desired to offer a suggestion, he was sure the chair would be glad to hear him.

As Lord Ryan sat down there was a buzz of conversation and considerable applause, but still it seemed as if nobody was willing to respond to the appeal. Then suddenly a voice among them said, "Let Harrick speak," and in a moment the name of Harrick was repeated on all sides. Men turned their heads towards the main door, and it seemed as if some spark of electricity had suddenly enlivened this dead and inert mass. Dr. Laud, on hearing the name, had looked up eagerly, and was scanning the room. Lord Burgos frowned slightly, but said nothing ; whereas Overdon, who

seemed to have expected this, gave utterance to an audible "Hear, hear," and, smiling, whispered a few words to Sir Richard. The chairman scarcely knew what to do under the circumstances.

The call of "Harrick" became louder and louder, the shuffling of feet presently broke out into a clapping of hands, until somebody in the centre of the room reminded the audience that by the rules of the club no stranger could speak unless invited by the chair. Sir Richard, who scarcely required this hint, rose with a sort of dogged good humour, and said that if Mr. Harrick was present in the room, and desired to speak, the meeting would be very glad to hear him. This announcement was the sign for another hearty round of applause. Again the name of Harrick sounded through the room, and grew louder at every moment. The men were determined that he should speak; he evidently reluctant to come forward on this occasion; the noise increased and had become almost deafening, when it ceased as by command, and the clear, melodious voice of an orator fell upon the hushed room.

"I have felt considerable reluctance, Mr. Chairman, in responding to your kind invitation, not because I am a stranger in the neighbourhood of Thamestone, but because I am imperfectly acquainted with the circumstances of this building.

Nor would I have ventured to speak, sir, even after the decided manner in which the meeting testified its desire to hear me, were it not that I feel myself in the position of a man who has by some superior fortune escaped the onslaught of a disease, and whose advice in the hour of danger, and in the presence of physicians, may be of use. But let it not be imagined by those who have desired to hear, that what I am going to say will be pleasant or entertaining. If ever there was a moment in my life when I wished for the sting of the scorpion, that I might be unto them as the scourge in their sides, and thorns in their eyes, it is now; for unless I am strangely mistaken, unless I have entirely misunderstood the speeches of the address, sir, I have witnessed one of the most humiliating spectacles which it is possible for a working man of England to behold. The last few hours have taught me a lesson I shall not easily forget. My work compelled me to spend the day in the country, amid green fields, and under a blue sky, and when I entered this city by the road, I knew that I should find neither smiling verdure around me nor an unclouded canopy above. It is now nearly ten years ago that I passed some months of my life in a yard hard by; and young as I then was, the city oppressed me. As I passed through the streets to-day, and as, driven by sad curiosity, I wandered again through the lanes, and the alleys, and the

courts of the lower town, and beheld the filth accumulating in every direction, the refuse of days unremoved, the houses in bad repair, the lighting imperfect, and the drainage most dangerously neglected, my heart sank within me, and I felt that pity was almost wasted upon a race of men who could tolerate so abominable a state of affairs. Great heaven! To think that twenty thousand Englishmen, born in the image of God, and with a freedom that equals the birds of heaven, should consent to live together upon a few acres of ground, and allow their yards to become dung-heaps, their tanks cesspools, and their gutters rivers of poison, is to me almost incredible. Are there not amongst them thousands who pay rates, and who have a right to as much and more attention than the richest and most influential inhabitant? Are there not thousands who have looked on while there has been unwise management, while there has been, while there is, unpardonable neglect of duty; while men, to whom they have entrusted the keeping of health, which is the better part of life, are allowing death and disease to enter their doors, and pollution to come in by the windows, and they have never stretched forth a hand to arrest and punish the crime? Will they wait until a pestilence swoops down upon them and tears away their children? Will they hesitate until some benevolent man does

to-morrow what they should have done yesterday? Will they still boast that they possess self-respect and independence as the members of a rich, numerous, and powerful body—while this state of things lasts for another day?

“Sir, I was tired with my work and disgusted with this sight when I inquired for some place where I could meet my brethren of labour without the intervention of the potman. I was shown this building. I had heard it spoken of years ago, as a scheme, and when I was told that it was ready, I rejoiced, for here at last I thought I should find indications of a reviving spirit. I enter this room, sir, and what do I find? A small clique of men who are evidently going through a programme, while the great majority of members sit by sulkily and discontentedly for very shame. There is a murmur of dissent, but I can read it in your eyes, I can see it in your faces; for here at last is a good man, whose name is known as that of a great and noble philanthropist, who has done to-day the work you should have done years ago yourselves, who has given you a large alms out of pity, the taking of which has brought the blush of shame upon your cheeks. Yet, being ashamed, you have not the courage to speak. You are patronised and petted by a knot of priests and landowners; you have a house built

for you, and a code of rules drawn up, as though you were a parcel of children; and all you can do is to sit by sulkily and in silence. You boast that you are living as a free race in a free country, but I tell you that you are hereditary bondsmen, born in slavery and not strong enough to free yourselves. When will you feel that the days of dependence are over? that the populace has at last grown out of its teens? that it has become a strong and mighty man, vigorous and beautiful in the sight of Heaven, and possessor of the world and all it contains? To think of your being patronised by priests! I know neither of the gentlemen in clerical garb on the platform, but I tell them that if they had done their duty they would have taught you that cleanliness comes before godliness, and that sober independence and self-respect come before either. If I had been Lord Ryan I would have scorned to give you this ground. I would have built upon it, as a conspicuous warning, an asylum or a workhouse, as the ultimate goal to which your sloth and neglect, your indolence and indifference, must necessarily bring you. I know what I say. There is no lack of power among you. There is no want of means. Some of your houses, if they were not so dirty, would be handsome; there is not one of you who does not earn a minimum of

two pounds a week, and there are many who earn double that sum. I walked through the High Street and I found that there alone you support in opulence and splendour no less than twenty public-houses, and Heaven knows how many more in the neighbourhood.

“Men of Thamestone who are members of this club, if you have never been ashamed of yourselves before, I think it is time that you should be ashamed this day. I have been in many lands, and I have spoken with many men; I have lived with the Roman and the Greek, I know the Gaul in Paris and the Teuton in Berlin, and I have found them all awakening to the new life that is dawning upon us. I found them believing that we have a glorious creed, of which the articles are industry, sobriety, and independence, lawfulness, perseverance, and combination, with which we are not to be resisted nor to be upset. If we are numerous as the sands of the seashore, we are mighty as the whirlwind. I beseech you to remember that you want no assistance from landlords, and no patronage from priests; that you can do without a noble chairman, and that you can dispense with the services of an aristocratic committee. High names in a thing of this sort are a delusion and a snare. You ought to be wise enough and thrifty enough to manage your own affairs; and if you possessed that sense of power

which is your due, you ought not to leave this room without subscribing amongst yourselves a sum that shall be sufficient not only to buy this building, but sufficient to buy the freehold from his lordship at the fair market value."

CHAPTER VII.

THE PATRONS.

THE speech ended as abruptly as it had begun and for a few moments the entire audience was wrapped in silence. The intelligence that something good was going on had evidently reached the half-hearted who were lingering outside or dawdling in the rest of the building, for they had come trooping in during the speech, and the lower part of the hall and the doorway were now crowded with eager and expectant faces. There was no longer an appearance of sulk; the silence, like the occasional interruption, was but the sign of deep interest. Here was a man who spoke truth to them out of their midst. It was a voice they knew; and, though hard, they loved it.

When it ceased there rose from their midst a cheer, the like of which had not been heard in Thamestone. Men turned round to gaze at their bold teacher; they began conversing with each other, they cheered again and again, and threw

the platform into such consternation that Sir Richard Steele was obliged to put his hands in his pockets and lean back in his chair.

The platform, indeed, had listened to the speech with mingled feelings. The chairman seemed to have expected something of the kind from the first, but Lord Burgos, schooled as he was in debate, could not help betraying more than once that he felt seriously annoyed and indignant. He bit his lips, frowned, and whispered a few words to Sir Richard, and there lay in his dark and somewhat sinister eyes an expression which had frequently curbed the sarcasm of his opponents in the House. Dr. Laud was still less able to control himself. He evidently did not relish being thus bearded, and would have jumped up to interrupt the flood of words but for the persistent efforts of one of his friends, who, sitting by his side, held him down by main force. Nevertheless, such expressions as "infamous, blasphemous, and highly indecorous," were the mildest with which he could express his deep disgust, which was not lessened by the fact that Charles Overdon seemed beyond all things delighted, and was loudest and longest in his applause. He leaned forward to catch a glimpse at the worthy Rector, and nodded to him with a malicious and somewhat provoking smile.

But the greatest sinner of all in his eyes seemed to be Lord Ryan, who had for a moment laughed

heartily; and it was with nothing less than consternation that he saw that nobleman rise with an air in which all traces of former depression had entirely vanished. It seemed as if a great load had fallen from him, and there was a genuine grace in the way in which he began by thanking Mr. Harrick for the frank way in which he had expressed his opinions. The cheers of the audience had convinced him that they were not merely his own, but theirs, and although there were a good many hard hits and a few unjust charges, he had great pleasure in acknowledging that the bulk of it was only too true.

“Your town is dirty,” said he, “and it is mainly in consequence of your own neglect. As far as this club is concerned, nothing in the world would have pleased me more than to have seen you establish it entirely amongst yourselves. I tried every means and failed; had Mr. Harrick been here earlier he might have succeeded. But now that he has come and shown you the way, I shall be only too glad to follow. Gentlemen, the moment you show me a good list of trustees, and can pay a fair instalment, you shall have the freehold of this plot of ground, with my best wishes, at its fair market value, either payable by instalments or in a lump sum. It strikes me that this meets with your approval. (Loud cheers.) There is nothing I should like to see more than this club self-supporting. We have tried to

begin it from above, you prefer that it should begin from below ; and as you know more about building than I do, we must suppose you are right. I only make one reservation in the transfer deed, which I earnestly hope will never be put into practice ; that in case of failure I should have the option of repurchase at a valuation. With that, gentlemen, I most heartily bid you God-speed. There is no reason why you should fail, and I don't think you will ; and if you will do me the honour to elect me a member of your club, I shall be glad to look in occasionally."

The cheers with which this good-humoured speech was greeted, seemed almost to eclipse the former ; and nobody knew how it began, or who began it, but presently the whole room was singing, "For he's a jolly good fellow," with a tremendous "Hip, hip, hip, hurrah !" As soon as the last cheer subsided, Mr. Tode and Mr. Prone, eager to lead the new current of opinion, were on their legs, the former actually in the middle of a flattering speech, when he became aware that a burly engineer, a great unionist leader, was also up, and that the meeting would hear nothing of Mr. Tode.

He consequently collapsed, and the engineer, in a few words, nearly each of which was underlined, thanked Lord Ryan for his readiness to meet the proposal, and assured him that in a week's time the full sum would be paid over to his agent in

Thamestone, for which reason he hoped the meeting would consent to an adjournment for that period.

Before anybody could rise to second the adjournment, Lord Burgos jumped up with that suppressed energy which had always something terrible in it. He said but little, and that little was said in a quiet tone, but it was quite enough to completely damp the spirits of the meeting. Men felt that there was nothing to do now, but go home and think it over. With a sneer that seemed to shrivel up all the new-found jocundity, he complimented the meeting on its sudden, and doubtless excellent plan. They had been told that evening, he said, that high names were a delusion and a snare, and although he did not exactly know what was meant by that word "high," he very much feared that the speaker who had used it was opposed to the names of all persons superior in rank or station to himself. He had no inclination to quarrel with that speaker or with any of the members, if such was their opinion—he hoped the club would be self-supporting—but he begged to retire from the post of chairman, and although he very much feared that his duties would next week call him to the House of Lords, he would be happy to resign his post into the hands of the doubtless excellent person that would succeed him. At the same time, it was to him a matter of deep regret and pain, that the meeting should so enthusiastically have cheered a

person who evidently spoke in a spirit of agitation and uncompromising hostility to the upper classes ; and he was no less surprised than indignant, that they should have been led so easily to treat his old friend, Lord Ryan, a man whose reputation for gentle wisdom, wise generosity, and generous philanthropy, was second to none in the world, with such scant courtesy and so little consideration. They seemed suddenly to have forgotten that Lord Ryan had devoted much time and attention, and more money, for years, to the furthering of their interests. They had never cheered him, but they were quite ready to cheer any total stranger—the stranger the better, evidently—who had the boldness to rise and say that such a man was not wanted, and should be done away with. Under the circumstances, he begged to second the motion for adjournment.

It was well he did so, for the meeting began to feel very uncomfortable. Lord Ryan looked annoyed, and Dr. Laud was struggling with his friend to get up, when Sir Richard, with much tact, adjourned the meeting and left the chair. There was an immediate rush for the door. The room had by this time become very crowded and unbearably hot, and as the architect in planning it seemed to have forgotten that people are generally much more eager to go out than to come in, there was a crush, during which Lord Ryan was observed

to go forward and look for someone. The Rev. Josiah Sawder, who was beyond all things indignant that he would lose his seat on the committee, took this opportunity of venting his just anger in the ear of the Rector. Dr. Laud generally ignored Dissenters, but listened for a moment.

"I never heard anything more impudent in my life; did you, my dear Doctor?"

"Impudent, sir?" said the Rector, as if he were pouring out vinegar; "it's no longer that. These paid agitators are like the rot in our sheep—they always attack the best."

"Don't you think it our duty to counteract the influence of this man?"

"Counteract, sir?" asked the Rector haughtily. "That would be to acknowledge it. Our duty, Mr. Sawder, is to pity and ignore. Good evening." And the Rector walked away, pretending not to see the hand which Mr. Sawder extended in brotherly love. Lord Ryan, on the other hand, who had returned from the door, evidently disappointed, shook that same hand heartily, and, what was more, held it for a moment.

"I wish you would do me a service, Mr. Sawder."

"Oh, my lord, if there is anything I can do for your lordship, I shall be too delighted," said the Rev. Josiah.

"You frequently talk with these men. Could you find out from one or two of these where this

Mr. Harrick lives, and where a letter will reach him? If you can send it to the Cottage, and the time he is likely to remain here, you will oblige."

"I am afraid, my lord, that he is one of those unprincipled, wicked men——"

"He did not look like it, Mr. Sawder. I tried to find him, but he had slipped out of the room before the end. I particularly wish to see him; and you can oblige me in this."

The Rev. Josiah promised to do all in his power, and went; but Lord Ryan remained for some moments alone and in deep thought. He had been most singularly impressed by the strange speech; but strange though that speech had been, it had not affected him so powerfully as had the individuality of the speaker. While Harrick spoke, Lord Ryan had watched every line of his face, every glance of his eye, every motion of his hand, for he knew that there was character in all these. And as he went down-stairs he held his head thoughtfully on one side and pondered, for in this strange and bold speaker he had recognised the youthful artisan in the garden of Genthorpe.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE HOUSE OF RYAN.

THE last of the house of Ryan was that most useful of beings, an eccentric man. His eccentricity did not come out upon him in the shape of beaver hats and Beau Brummel neckties, nor in the carrying of white umbrellas, or the leaving of a crowded church because the clergyman was giving way to heterodoxy. But he had a knack of quietly going his own way, and separating from that crowd which was supposed to constitute the public; and he was tacitly allowed to break through a whole code of conventionalities just merely because he was Lord Ryan.

Having been disappointed in his first love, he threw himself with amazing energy into a study of the law. That a rich and hereditary legislator should spend his time in studying the constitution of the realm, was odd enough; but that he should knock up a friendship with a poor, briefless, and Radical young barrister whom he had known at

school, take him down to the Cottage, introduce him to his friends, and finish by marrying Eleanor, the said barrister's sister, who was keeping house for her brother in Bayswater, was almost too much. The young nobleman thought it too little. He requested his solicitors to retain Mr. Overdon for every case connected with his estates, and the young barrister, being once launched, was soon known as one of the smartest men about Westminster.

Here, at least, Lord Ryan should have stopped. Not he. In spite of many remonstrances, some six years later he supported him with all his influence at Thamestone, canvassed for him, spoke for him, frankly acknowledged that he was radically wrong, but likely to be useful, and actually got him returned as the junior member. Sir Marmaduke Underdown, the ultra-Tory, who had married Miss Voyson, Lord Ryan's eldest sister, turned dark blue with rage, and swore he would never again speak to any of them, and forbade his wife all intercourse with her idiotic brother. The remaining Miss Voyson, instead of taking warning by so fearful an example, within a few months went and married the Radical intruder, and was likewise cut off. The amount of reproach that was heaped on Lord Ryan for this conduct would have been awful to a less eccentric man, but he rather liked being cut off by his heavy

and pompous brother-in-law; and he could not see that he had done wrong.

"If Margaret likes him half as well as Eleanor and I like each other she will be very happy," he had said; "and as for his getting in for Thamestone, he will make a much more useful member than old Duffus, who is always getting into the wrong lobby, and has slept away his evenings in the tea-room for the last three sessions."

Overdon did make a more useful member. It was through him alone that the United Empire Railway Company carried the Bill through committee for running its main line past Thamestone. It was he who got the river widened and embanked. It was he mainly, in conjunction with his brother-in-law, who had first started the plan of new drainage, which, it was hoped, would be completed at the end of the century. These things having been done, the lawyer took his rest. He had found the city apathetic—he had tried to rouse it—he had freely sprinkled his philosophy—but in vain. He found that he was returned through his brother's influence and no other, and he reserved his philosophy for the opposition benches.

For eight years Lord Ryan tasted a happiness which is not the lot of many. He travelled where he listed with his beautiful wife—their only trouble being the death of their son at an early age.


Lord Ryan felt almost as if he could have wished death to take away the daughter instead ; but he became reconciled to that loss, when, by a sudden accident, his wife died also. The blow was almost too heavy. He lived on at the Cottage, endeavouring like one walking in sleep to find a path out of the darkness. He tried hard work, he tried society, he tried solitude, he tried to console himself with the idea that little Eugenie was worth living for. But one day, while she was playing at his feet, in all the large-eyed innocence and naïveté of childhood, he began to dread the time when she must cast off the charms of growth and assume the definite forms of womanhood. He remembered with something akin to horror how frequently he had been disappointed at twenty by the promises of ten. He watched his child narrowly, yet was afraid to spoil her by the intense affection which sometimes seized upon him. He suddenly made up his mind, and, like the man he was, acted without consulting anyone.

Little Eugenie was placed in charge of an excellent governess, Mrs. Woodley, and sent away to an estate of his in Yorkshire, where the air was proverbially healthy, and where nature had blended her sweetest with her most romantic scenery. In this home she was surrounded with everything that could improve her physique ; and so anxious was he that this little one should

grow up the image of her mother, that he held the culture of her mind as of secondary importance. But what the father somewhat neglected, the daughter, driven by her own desires and by the counsels of her governess, cultivated assiduously. Lord Ryan, unable to bear the weight of solitude at the Cottage, shut it up, and began to travel. He had always had a great fondness for the East, and in roaming about that part of the world, and collecting the rarest and most precious relics that money could buy, he spent the next six or seven years of his life.

Gradually he began to perceive that the letters which reached him from Yorkshire were written by no mere school-girl. At first he put this down to the influence, sometimes even to the assistance of Mrs. Woodley, and for a considerable time he took an almost malicious pleasure in picking out the exact places where Eugenie was indebted for her vigorous expression or her clear thought to the mental qualities of another. The day came when he was delightfully undeceived.

Something had stirred up the Yorkshire blood, and the Ridings were divided by a fierce party spirit. It was as usual a division of class, and the populace feeling itself aggrieved clamoured loudly. Lord Ryan was first informed of these matters by Mrs. Woodley, who endeavoured to describe to him the real state of parties, and who, sympathising with



the aristocracy, became in the midst of her explanation unintelligible and inconsistent. A few days afterwards, there came a letter from Eugenie on the same subject, but, somewhat to his surprise, that young lady, who had scarcely completed her sixteenth year, taking an exactly opposite view of the case, pleaded the popular side of the question with such clearness, and exposed the fallacies of her companion's arguments with such vigour, that Lord Ryan was convinced against his will, and obliged to confess that Mrs. Woodley's influence was not by any means so great as he had imagined.

From that moment the letters between father and daughter became more frequent and breathed a more tender spirit. He, being now suddenly convinced that what he had not dared to hope had come true, and that his daughter's mind belonged to a high class of intellect, applied himself with delight to its cultivation. And she finding that she had gained a friend where she had not looked for more than a mentor, and that she could exchange confidences and confide secrets where she had been taught to pay respects only—threw herself into his correspondence with all the fervour of a young and pure mind, tinged with the rays of a sun of knowledge that was slowly rising before her rapt and wistful gaze.

While travelling over the ancient soil, and lingering among the tidemarks of history, Lord Ryan had

occupied himself much with the study of the Eastern races, and his letters were now filled with minute and interesting descriptions of those strange tribes, whose habits and humours he could illustrate by the light of his own vast knowledge and scholarship. Eugenie drank in every word of his teaching with avidity, and he was enchanted and secretly flattered to find that in her descriptions of home life, and of natural scenery, or in her discussion of some question of the day, she carried an amount of imagination and fire which seemed to him like a chastened reflection of that which surrounded him. Gradually the feeling of desolation which had driven him from England, gave way before this new and delightful influence. A great political contest required his presence at home, and Lord Ryan began to think of returning with a certain amount of pleasure. But as he had never done anything like other men, so did he come home after a fashion of his own.

Still haunted by the idea that Nature had not carried out her original fairy-like promises with Eugenie, he kept his intended return a secret from her. And travelling home with the utmost speed, arrived at the railway station without having informed even Mrs. Woodley. The reason of this odd conduct he could not have explained to anyone else, and with difficulty to himself; but there was a vague determination in his mind to go back to the


East if he should find that his fears had proved too true. It was almost with the agitation of a lover that Lord Ryan entered his own park, one evening in May, without being recognised by the lodge-keeper. He strolled among the ancient trees in the hopes of catching a glimpse of Eugenie before entering the house. He was fortunate.

The delicious evening had tempted his daughter into the loveliest and most picturesque portion of the park, where, by the side of a brook, she sat sketching, and talking to Brutus, her faithful mastiff, who was lying at her feet. As Lord Ryan heard her voice some distance off, he could approach her without being observed, and for some moments he gazed upon the auburn locks that fell in profusion around her shoulders, and upon the broad and noble forehead, smooth and white as ivory, with the feelings of a dreamer. At some slight and involuntary noise Brutus jumped up and gave tongue. The young lady started, raised her eyes with calm astonishment towards the place where he stood, and Lord Ryan felt that it was no longer a dream, for that his fondest hopes had been realized. For the sake of those eyes he could have forgiven every fault, every imperfection of feature; but as they were in keeping with a face of classic regularity, he felt a great happiness come over him, a happiness as tender and as deep as that of a lover, and infinitely holier and purer.

He raised his hat with a somewhat Oriental courtesy and gravity of mien, and advanced a few steps, while addressing to her the ordinary polite excuse which a stranger in his circumstances would offer. He deemed himself unknown, and truly when Eugenie beheld the thin but stately figure, and the bronzed and pensive features of the stranger, she did not recognize her father, although she was singularly moved at the sound of his voice. Their conversation under these circumstances was necessarily somewhat reserved, but there was a something in him that inspired and invited confidence.

She blushed to find herself discussing with warmth the different effects of sunset in spring and autumn. With some hesitation she allowed the wanderer to see her sketch, and was surprised to find that he pointed out a few trifling mistakes, while praising the whole conception of the scene with the evident knowledge of a master. Suddenly some unusual expression which he uttered, and which Lord Ryan had frequently used in his letters to her alone, put an end to her doubts and misgivings, and the next moment she was enfolded by his arms, her head upon his breast, and her hands clasped round his neck.

Amid the laughter and tears of her joy she told him that if he had not turned out to be her father, that gentleman would have stood but little chance of being received with proper favour, for that she



had made up her mind to make the stranger before her a standard; and he as frankly confessed that he had come like a thief in the night, because he had hoped to find her what she was, but feared lest she might not be what he had found her. It was a moment of pure joy, for they were already known to each other in spirit; each had made an ideal of the other and found it realized.

But Brutus, who was a conservative dog, and to whom these proceedings appeared of a highly irregular character, continued to give forth a deep and remonstrative bark, not unmingled with a touch of threat. Eugenie, being happy, could not allow her faithful companion and protector to be thus harassed; so, skipping from her father's side, she threw her arms round the mastiff's lion-like neck, and said,

"Brutus, for shame! have you no better memory? This is my darling father, about whom we have talked so often together, and who brought you here when you were quite a ridiculous little puppy. Come and see him."

Whereupon Brutus with dignified mien approached the stranger, and having taken a comprehensive and evidently satisfactory sniff, gave notice of his approval by a single wag of the tail and a pensive wink of his large brown eyes. The trio then walked to the house, and for a few days Lord Ryan was pleased to play at guest with his

own daughter. She was scarcely out of his sight. He watched her ways, he pondered her words, and analysed her looks, and he was surprised to find that so young and inexperienced a creature could fulfil the duties of her position with so much dignity and grace. When he came to listen to her artless conversation with Mrs. Woodley and himself, or drew her out into a more animated discussion, and noticed the warmth with which she stated her opinion without diminishing in that clearness and originality which had so charmed him, he marvelled with himself that such a creature could be his own flesh and blood. He had spent a poor man's fortune in buying ancient models and statues of the best masters, faultless in style and execution, but cold and lifeless: here was a being more perfect than the most exquisite marble, warm with life and health, assuming each moment some new and graceful attitude, and sometimes turning upon him an eye the liquid depths of which he could not fathom, but of which even he felt the strange fascination.

It seemed a pity to transplant so fair and innocent a flower out of these pastoral surroundings to the artificial soil of the metropolis; but it had to be done. Lord Ryan felt that there should be a great future in store for his child. He had anxiously debated the question with himself, and he had become fully aware that Eugenie's impres-

sionable mind would be strangely agitated by the life to which she was about to be introduced. He himself, being eccentric, cared more for solitude or the companionship of a good friend than for all society; but he knew that he had no right to engraft his eccentricities upon his child, or let her become by training what he had become by natural and gradual development.

The awful wrath of the true-blue baronet, Sir Marmaduke Underdown, had by the course of years become somewhat appeased, when he saw that the river at Thamestone was in no danger of being fired by Radicalism. He had even gone so far as to permit his wife to see and receive her sister, though he himself had never allowed the "intruder" to enter his door. But on this occasion he was glad to take charge of Eugenie, and accordingly, Eugenie was brought out by that highly fashionable woman, Lady Hester Underdown, with an *éclat* worthy of so much wealth, wit, and beauty. Mrs. Overdon, who was not so ambitious as her sister, was glad that she was not called upon to perform the duty, though, having no children of her own, she willingly undertook to superintend Lord Ryan's establishment. The great house in Rufus Square was taken out of its chintz, the large and solitary rooms became busy, there was again the sound of music and merriment, and Eugenie became one of the heroines of a London season.

Both aunts had resolved that she should be married, or at least engaged before it was over, to some one befitting her rank, education, and fortune. Eugenie, in no way bewildered by the change, had not been in London for more than a week, when she determined to do nothing of the kind. She was then only just eighteen, and being in no hurry, for two years adhered to her resolution, and refused all offers. Men began to be rather afraid of her conversational powers, and of her somewhat imperious way of showing contempt. It had come to be considered as settled, that an ordinary man had no chance, and when the Hon. Robert Fairfax appeared on the scene, his acceptance was regarded as only just within the bounds of possibility. That it could have been even within the bounds of probability, Eugenie herself would scarcely have believed on her first arrival in London. But it had come, it had been, it had passed as a short dream in her existence. Now that it lay behind her, she looked upon it more as a transition state, necessary perhaps for her development, but which she could never remember without that mixed feeling of sadness and humility which is the inevitable companion of transition.

Eugenie discovered that she had made a mistake. She thought it a mistake for life, and her soul rose in anger against her father, whom she accused

inwardly of not having assisted her with his counsels, while he was saddened to think that his precious jewel should have been entrusted to a man of such painful respectability.

But she was not unhappy. If Fairfax had been a man of great talents, he would probably have been a man of bad temper, but he was mediocre and amiable. He was neither sufficiently witty to make enemies, nor sufficiently high-principled to lose friends. He made it the business of his life to adore his wife. He surrounded her with everything she could desire, or he could anticipate, and the future Countess of Exmoor reigned almost supreme in the small but brilliant world of her surrounding. But what stimulated other women to renewed activity, wearied her in a year; and it is probable that she would have begun to feel discontented, had not a sudden attack of fever snatched her husband from her side, and broken the bond that was beginning to press her.

By her husband's will she was put in possession for life of his own ancestral home, Beecham Park, as large and as lovely as many a continental dukedom, with none of its population, and with a revenue more than sufficient even for extravagance. For some time after her husband's death she returned to her father's house, but a cloud had arisen between them, a cloud which partially obscured them to each other, and which, as clouds often do,

chilled both. There was, as may be easily imagined, a reluctance on either side to touch on their mutual relations, and the estrangement, however slight at first, could not but increase. The tender bond of a wife and mother would have healed it, but Eugenie had known no woman's love since Mrs. Woodley's death, and her development was necessarily somewhat one-sided. She still loved her father with a deep silent affection, but she knew that he thought not as she did, that in many things his feelings were different from her own, and that she could henceforth look up to him as counsellor and friend, but not always as guide.

Was it strange that at twenty-two this gifted woman, scarcely arrived at maturity, should be given to fits of profound melancholy? Was it strange that she began to dislike the gaieties of the parliamentary season, and fled to her beautiful retreat at Beecham, to spend her days with one young female companion in any way she listed? Lord Ryan, alarmed about her health, did not retain her; but when his occasional visits and the tone of her letters convinced him that she was in a healthier frame of mind, he determined to get her back to his house, and endeavour to arrange a marriage that should relieve her at once of unhappiness and solitude. Knowing that she might be reluctant to leave her retreat, he issued invitations in her name for a state dinner and garden

party at the Cottage. Eugenie prided herself in her tact and talent for arranging these matters, and when she heard that it was all settled, she surrendered with considerable readiness. Such was the state of affairs at the time this history commences; the four gentlemen having been left for the purposes of explanation, on the road to the Cottage.

Lord Burgos, who had volunteered to drive, and who was an unsparing whip, wheeled the carriage within an inch of the butler's toes some good half hour before they were expected. Lord Ryan had hoped that his daughter would be at the door to receive him, and felt strangely pained when he was told that the ladies were dressing, and would not be down for some time. He entered his room with a sigh, despatched his valet with unusual sharpness, and threw himself on the sofa. She had come; but if she had been in the proper spirit she might have managed to welcome him.

There was a slight knock at the door. How well he knew it! How joyously he had often answered! Before he could answer it now the door opened gently, and her voice called to him with the same soft winning tone as of yore. Lord Ryan opened his arms without a word, and folded his daughter to his breast. He felt that they

were again united—that the estrangement was gone.

“Have you been so lonely,” said she, seating herself by his side on the sofa, “poor darling?”

“Are you perfectly content in coming back to me, Eugie?” asked he, looking into her eyes. She nodded.

“I hope you are quite well and strong.”

“I rode fifteen miles on Tottomy to-day,” said she, “and I could have done thirty.”

“And you are again happy?”

“Yes. I am again happy in seeing you.”

“I want you to be very happy.”

“*Very* happy?” repeated Eugenie, seriously. “Is any body ever *very* happy?”

“Still pensive,” said Lord Ryan, shaking his head slightly, “and still pale.”

“No,” said she with a laugh. “Dear Lady Burgos says I look as fresh as a dairymaid.”

“As fresh as the milk, she meant,” said her father, stroking the hair from her forehead and looking anxious.

She escaped his hands, and playfully held up one finger. “Now, you are not to speak on that subject at all.”

“I wish I knew what would bring the smile back into your eyes, child. It comes to your lips

sometimes, but will it ever return to those dear eyes?"


"Perhaps," said she, feeling that they were dimming. "Let us go down. Lady Burgos will be waiting."

CHAPTER IX.

YESTERDAY AND TO-DAY.

IF a painter had desired to picture the beauty of age and typify the stateliness of maturity, he could have chosen no more appropriate model than the Countess of Burgos. She had been one of the loveliest young women at the court of the Sailor King, and when her father was appointed ambassador in Paris the ladies of the Bourgeois Court might affect to sneer at *l'Anglaise affreuse*, but the men knew better. It used to be said that she held a very much brighter and livelier Court than the daughter of the Sicilies; and it was reported that the aged Talleyrand, in kissing her hand, had assured her that his master was determined to abandon "*le juste milieu*" since he had become convinced that there was "*une juste meilleure*."

There had, indeed, been rumours that the heir to a royal throne had sworn that Lady Elizabeth Trevlyn, and no other woman in the universe, should be his queen. Lady Elizabeth Trevlyn,




however, had been carefully educated in the belief that she was born to become Countess of Burgos, and she had the good taste to prefer a dissolute and handsome young nobleman with an income of a quarter of a million to a dissolute and ill-favoured prince with an alarming debt and a shaky throne. She became Countess of Burgos, and although she had worn no crown, she had occupied a most brilliant position in every capital of Europe. She had thrown herself into politics with natural zeal and ability. It was she who had induced her husband to give up a political career to diplomacy. She managed to get him appointed to Berlin long before it was his right, and from Berlin to St. Petersburg when he was quite a young man, and, in the opinion of old diplomatic fogies, an ignorant upstart.

It was she, doubtless, who had helped him in the discovery of that secret treaty and correspondence, the exposure of which had ruined more than one great reputation and averted a calamitous war. She had played her part well in the secret and silent history of Europe, and she had played it without stooping to those means which her husband had used with very little scruple. She had come to love that husband with true and lasting affection, and at his death she had retired to Herron Hall and lived almost the life of a recluse. That she now consented to come to the Cottage, and

from thence to accompany her son to London, was somewhat astonishing, although, as she sat in the drawing-room, surrounded by the guests, it was evident that even now she was, like Hertford, "fitted to shine in courts with unaffected grace."

Her silent and unfathomable son, standing somewhat in the background, looked at the silken silver locks, the forehead that was scarcely furrowed, the eyes that were still open and bright, and he repeated to himself that he had never seen any other woman who was fit to be Countess of Burgos, except the one who now entered on her father's arm. There was a momentary expression of surprise in Eugenie's face, when her eyes, flying through the room, met those of Lord Burgos at the other end. She felt at once that this was a little plan. His mother, with whom she had spent some hours, had not told her a word. Her father had been equally silent, nor had her own maid, who was generally very well informed, given her the slightest hint.

The Countess was at that moment conversing with her favourite rector, but she watched the grave, pale face, intently. Overdon, who had his back turned, scanned her in the mirror, and the Earl was too much struck by her quiet elegance, to take the trouble of hiding his admiration. But, beyond that expression of surprise, Eugenie's face betrayed nothing. She welcomed him with polite-



ness as she welcomed others, and he knew by her quick glance that there was very little hope. They were no longer in the age of romance.

Mrs. Fairfax had known for some time that Lord Burgos regarded her with unusual attention, but she had not been much impressed by the fact. She knew everything that could be said in his favour; that he was one of the most rising statesmen, one of the most promising orators, and the most influential among the younger nobles. She guessed very nearly everything that could be publicly said against him, and she turned from him to Dr. Laud with precisely the same amount of courteous indifference. One might have thought her a woman of indifferent temperament, but for the delightful smile with which she turned to her uncle and allowed him to kiss her on both cheeks.

"You have put a little too much powder on, Eugie," whispered he.

"*Méchant comme toujours,*" returned she, smiling and giving him a pinch.

"We are so grateful to you, Lady Burgos," said Lord Ryan, "to have come over to-day. It was almost too much to expect you to leave your beautiful retreat."

"I am very glad to have come," answered she, making room for him on the settee. "It is some time since I was here, and I find that you are

making your retreat more beautiful than mine. Your new picture gallery is really most admirable."

"You probably do not remember now to whom I am indebted for the suggestion," said Lord Ryan.

"Oh, yes, I do," said the Countess, laughing. "I have not made too many good suggestions in my life, to forget any."

"Why, papa," said Eugenie, with a quick glance, "you never told me."

"My dear child—how could he? The suggestion was made before you were thought of," said the Countess.

"I did not know that you had known Lady Burgos so long as that, papa."

"It was not Lady Burgos who made the suggestion," said Lord Ryan, quietly. "It was Lady Elizabeth Trevlyn."

There was a moment's silence which might have become awkward but for Mr. Overdon.

"I declare," said he, with a shudder, "you have actually made me remember that I am getting old, Arthur. I very distinctly recollect the marriage of a certain Lady Elizabeth at the Embassy in Paris, and the impotent rage of half the young gentlemen at Court who had been so fortunate as to dance with her."

"Were you there," said her son, who had listened

silently. "You seem to have been everywhere. Come now, what year was it?"

"I should willingly have forgotten the year," returned the lawyer with a mock sigh, "for to us it was a year of mourning and repentance. To your father it was a year of grace—eighteen hundred and thirty-four."

"Thirty odd years," muttered the Earl to himself. But Dr. Laud, who stood next to him, heard it.

"Yes, my dear Lord Burgos," said he, almost solemnly, "your excellent father was wiser than young men now-a-days. He married in good time, and he became not only great, but happy."

"I know my father was wise, Doctor," returned the Earl, coldly: "but you must acknowledge that he was also more fortunate. They had been educated for each other, and a plan of that sort is generally a failure—but when it is not a failure it is a great success."

"And," continued the Doctor, who was not always the sharpest of men in matrimonial matters, "as it would be too much to expect such a success twice in a century, you have been left to do the best for yourself. I pity you—upon my word I do."

"Your pity is perhaps more deserved than you imagine," said the Countess, with a quick glance at Eugenie. "Mr. Overdon, what is this I hear about your public encouragement of a demagogue?"

If you can go back as far as '34, I can distinctly remember '48. Perhaps you have forgotten that."

"Not very likely," said Lord Ryan, smiling. "He has remembered well enough, but I doubt whether he has repented."

"Well, no, I have neither forgotten nor repented," said Overdon; and, seeing that the majority of his audience were somewhat puzzled, he continued, "It should be known to all whom it may concern, that I, Charles Overdon, was in those days guilty of a breach of the peace, amounting to high treason. During the Revolution of '48 I was in Paris, and had the great satisfaction of knocking down an insolent gendarme, crying 'Vive la Republique,' and hanging a Republican flag out of my window. *Voila tout.*"

"Which, but for the intervention of my grandfather, the then ambassador, might have cost you very dear," said the Earl, dryly.

"That's true enough," said Overdon. "I acknowledge the debt. But how did you know that?"

"Your name figures not very enviably in some of the secret despatches. If you will take the trouble to read them, you will see they do not reflect a very great amount of credit on your wisdom in those youthful days."

"You surprise me," exclaimed Overdon, "I

had no idea I had been made the subject of despatches."

"Such is the case," said the Earl, "some Dryasdust next century, grubbing among state papers, will find that amidst the boundless folly of the French, there was mixed up a leaven of English—shall we say youthful?—indiscretion."

"You are inclined to be severe," said Overdon, evidently annoyed. "I have no cause to regret my conduct."

"Thanks to the ambassador, evidently, uncle," said Eugenie, with a smile. "I did not know that you were so very near suffering for your great cause. Give me your arm, for I believe dinner has been announced, and you have become interesting."

The Earl bit his lip with vexation, and reluctantly gave his arm to Mrs. Overdon. He still felt deeply annoyed at the course which events had taken at the meeting, and when he saw Mrs. Fairfax walk away with her uncle, immediately upon his disapproval, he felt that she intended to give him a severe check. He was neither accustomed to checks nor enamoured of them, and he determined to test his real position with her.

He found his task not very difficult. However cold and indifferent Lord Ryan's daughter might seem, a bright jest, a quick answer, or an interesting conversation, invariably fettered her attention.

There was something in the inclination of her head, the sidelong glance, and half-curious smile with which she listened, that flattered most men, and had urged the most brilliant talkers to exert their powers.

Burgos was one of these. He had seldom met his equal in the art of conversation. On this occasion, feeling a double inducement, he laid himself out to please, and soon found himself rewarded by the attention he desired. His fund of political anecdotes, bon-mots, and interesting stories, seemed inexhaustible, and even his mother was somewhat surprised at her son's information about intrigues, princes, and people, whom she had known and forgotten when he was still below his teens. After some time, the conversation took a political turn, and soon arrived at the present condition of England. Burgos became bitter and severe.

"If we have many more such meetings as the one to-night," he said, looking sternly at Overdon, "there will come upon us a series of troubles, which you will be the first to deplore, as you will be one of the first to suffer."

"You all seem to be very excited about this meeting of to-night," said Eugenie, "what has happened?"

"Burgos is excited, because I was amused," said her uncle, calmly. "Behold me, after an absence

of some months in a country where our fellow-creatures are supposed to be going ahead in a mad and dangerous fashion, returning to the city of my representation, the place of all others where progress was supposed to be shut out, and lo ! I find the world topsy-turvy. I find out of the eater coming forth meat, and out of the strong, sweetness. Your landlord is bought out, and your patrons are being beautifully patronised. Verily a goodly sight !”

“I shall never forgive myself for having assisted at so unseemly a spectacle,” said Dr. Laud impatiently, and explaining in his own way the proceedings to the ladies.

“I do not see how you can call it unseemly,” said Lord Ryan, somewhat drearily. “It was strange. It was uncommon ; but then the world nowadays is strange.”

“The world is not strange,” answered the clergyman hotly, “it is the few people in it that act and think strangely.”

“That was evidently Mr. Sawder’s view of the question,” said Overdon. “He thought it very strange that you did not notice the hand he held out.”

“Mr. Sawder is a man of correct education, and knows his position,” said the Rector.

“He knew his own position well enough,” said the incorrigible lawyer with a smile, “but did not

seem to understand yours. Poor fellow! I could not help laughing at the way in which he and Sir Richard hesitated between applause and dignified silence."

"It is a great pity there was not some more of that hesitation," said Burgos cuttingly. "You believe that you are returned by the Radical electors of Thamestone, and that it is your duty to please them. I assure you the belief is altogether without foundation."

"Possibly it is," said Overdon, "but so is yours. I did not show my approval to please others, but because I was thoroughly amused. Here was the very man, Harrick, whom we had been speaking about at Dr. Laud's house, turning up unexpectedly in the very front ranks of the opposition, bearding us in our own stronghold, and in a few vigorous strokes putting us to flight with all our good intentions and fatherly cares. It was a most amusing spectacle."

"It was the most profane and absolute insolence I ever heard," said the Rector angrily.

"I maintain that the fault lies quite as much with those who encourage as with himself," said Burgos, "but there can be no doubt that the man is a most dangerous individual."

"Who is this creature Harrick, that has so excited your wrath?" asked Eugenie. "I have heard his name mentioned rather frequently of late."

"I daresay you have," said the clergyman, "he is one of these noisy, frothy, godless iconoclasts."

"Now, my dear sir," cried Overdon, "be fair. You said he was drunken, noisy, and lazy. Did he look like a drunkard?"

"He looked dissolute," said the Rector, "and he had that swagger that is begotten of laziness and drink."

"And I should not be surprised," said Lady Burgos, "if you told me that he was drunk at the time."

"That he certainly was not," said Lord Ryan, "he never looked more sober."

"Do you know him?" asked the Countess.

"I have seen him, and spoken to him once before," said Lord Ryan.

"And what do you think of him?"

"I shall do like our best judges—I shall reserve my judgment."

"You will find him," said the Rector, "corrupt in morals, as any man who attacks the Church must be. And, notwithstanding his frothy declamation, you will find him a coward, and contemptible."

"I scarcely think that," said Eugenie. "From what I hear, this man can be neither a coward nor contemptible. I am inclined to think that one who could rise as he did, and point out

the failures and weaknesses of both sides, must have had no ordinary amount of moral courage. You are silent, Lord Burgos. What do you think?"

"I have already said that I think the man a most dangerous individual," answered the Earl, "and meant to imply that he has great talents. It would be unjust if I were to deny him eloquence of a very rare character."

"That is praise indeed," said Eugenie, with heightened colour; "and, coming from an enemy, it is a generous tribute. There must have been something in him to rouse the audience, and make my father accept this proposal."

"I do not think the eloquence of Demosthenes and St. Paul combined would have prevailed upon Burgos to accept that same," said Overdon.

"Nothing would have induced me to consent," answered the Earl frankly. "I hold that it is the very first principle of a landlord never on any consideration to part with an inch of his land, certainly not to the people. It is the very backbone and foundation of our institution, and the moment it becomes popularised you may be sure we shall get popularised as well. I am altogether at a loss to imagine what good it can do the people. It only encourages an independence which they have not the means to maintain, and it fosters a spirit of interference in government which is a

great deal too rife already. I know what you are going to say, Overdon. It is something about personal cultivation, and the blessings of every peasant to rear his own crop and live in his own house on his own land. If land is to be owned at all, it had better be owned by great families, who superintend its cultivation by great traditions and science, instead of being subdivided, haggled over, and spoiled. While the faggot is tied together it holds, and may resist an inundation, but the moment you untie it and scatter the sticks, you deprive it of strength. It is then too late, and the waters overwhelm you before you know it."

"And has my dear father actually set an example in this untying?" asked Eugenie, smiling, and putting her hand in his.

"I have only taken out one of the sticks, my dear," said he.

"And that is dangerous enough, my lord," said Burgos gravely. "It loosens the bundle and lets in the water."


"Well," replied Lord Ryan carelessly, "let it come. It must come sooner or later."

"I hope that man Harrick will never be brought before me for a misdemeanour," said the Rector; "I might not be sorry to inflict an extreme penalty."

CHAPTER X.

THE NATURAL PRINCIPLE.

THE Cottage was, notwithstanding its humble name, one of the most charming residences in the neighbourhood of the metropolis. It was situated on the banks of that fair Thames, which, like a weary pilgrim, wends its way slowly toward the east; and although among the peaceable habitations of the rich it was neither the largest nor the most modern, it was admired and coveted by the owners of ambitious palaces. The original architect—for as it stood now it was the work of many hands—had in his day gained a great reputation for a severely classical style, and had gathered wealth by planning abodes that were pure, chaste, and uninhabitable. When his fortune exceeded his fame the master retired to the neighbourhood of Thamestone to have a laugh at the world; and being still active, had spent the last days of his life in erecting a mausoleum of awful classicality, and in building a snug abortion in



brick and mortar, which sometimes astonished even himself. Since then he had become the solitary occupant of his own masterpiece; his brilliant writings had retired to the back shelves of the National Library, and public opinion had come to the conclusion that he was a humbug, and ignorant of the first principles of his art.

The successive owners of the Cottage had reason to think otherwise. They found in the symmetry and practical harmony of the interior a proof that the designer was indeed a master in his profession; and although the requirements of fashion had obliged them to gradually extend the walls, nothing had been added except what was in conformity with the original design. Nature herself had become mollified, and lent her aid by veiling the uncouth exterior with unfading verdure. It was not easily visible from the high road, but few passed it on the river who did not linger for some moments, attracted by pardonable curiosity. The smooth lawns sloping down to the water's edge, the neat gravel paths, the tasteful and exquisite flower-beds, the rare old cedars and oaks, offered variety enough for a park. The house, so densely covered with ivy that the windows seemed like occasional breaks in the foliage of a forest, looked almost romantic enough for a ruin.

There was a great party at the Cottage the evening following, and looked at from the river it

appeared in one blaze of light, for the weather was sultry, and many of the windows were thrown wide open, to catch the faintest breath of air. There were sounds of music and of laughter from every corner, and in the great conservatory, in the new picture gallery, and in portions of the grounds, little groups had formed by a process of natural selection, which it was the noble host's pleasure to encourage.

The Cottage was a place which it was the ambition of small men to enter, and from which good men were careful not to be excluded. Politically, Lord Ryan was by no means so influential as many men in the county—as his great and youthful neighbour, Lord Burgos, for instance; but he gave a tone to society which was unmistakable and pure. He and his daughter alone could have abandoned old usages as they did, and broken through much of the dreadful stiffness and monotonous ceremony of county gatherings; and it was at their house alone that people found a nice observance of forms joined to an almost continental freedom of intercourse. It required the courteous dignity and thoroughly English refinement of the father, and the tact of the daughter, to bring about such harmonious working.

When Eugenie had gone to a home of her own, Lord Ryan tried it with his sister, Mrs. Overdon, and had given it up after the first

attempt. Eugenie had done something of the same kind in her own house, but had found very soon that the Honourable Robert Fairfax, though exceedingly anxious to please his wife, was utterly unable to understand what she meant; and after several failures, she had abandoned herself, with a sigh, to monotony and conventionalism.

When she visited her father's house again, she found how rare were the qualities he possessed, and how useless and even dangerous were her own gifts without their support. With something of the old spirit, Eugenie had this day set about making her arrangements to render the evening's entertainment worthy of their reputation. With a quiet and irresistible assumption of authority, she had taken the entire management out of her aunt's hands, had taken upon herself the sole direction of affairs, and issued her orders with a promptness and an energy long before breakfast, that announced to the servants, who had lapsed into a sort of party government, the return of Cæsarism in its most absolute form.

Eugenie had taken her list of guests and her plan of campaign into the Countess's room, with a naïve confession that the ex-ambassadrice was the only woman from whom she would consent to take advice and counsel. Lady Burgos was flattered and pleased, but in looking over the prospective

arrangements, could scarcely find any alteration to suggest. Practised as she was in the art of pleasing, she had to acknowledge that "this young thing," as she playfully called Eugenie, was almost as learned and conversant with its mysteries as herself. The success of the evening was complete. Lord Ryan had taken care to have the all-necessary preparations made, and a special train from London had conveyed not only the high and mighty of the empire, but the flower of continental aristocracy, who were enjoying the season in London. As a surprise, he had brought down the Austrian string band, which was still supposed to be in Paris, and which, being carefully concealed in the garden, had puzzled no less than delighted the guests.

In the discharge of her duties, the youthful widow had surpassed herself. Her father was astonished. Never before had he seen her so radiant, never before so bewitching. He knew that she was gifted with much intellect, but he was himself fascinated by the subtle and playful wit which she displayed, to him at least, for the first time in her life. The colour had come back to her cheeks, the deep glow had returned to her eyes, for the first time since her husband's death she had danced—only twice, it is true, but once with a young Austrian general who was on his wedding-tour, and once with Lord Burgos, who

had engaged her in conversation for a considerable time afterwards.

"Have you noticed Eugie?" said Lord Ryan to his brother-in-law, in a quiet nook of the conservatory, from whence they could watch her. "She looks very happy."

"She looks very beautiful," said Overdon, "and surprisingly like Eleanor."

"Do you think," said Lord Ryan with some hesitation, "that it is likely she will ever become as—hem—stout as Margaret?"

"I have no doubt she will," returned Overdon. "It lies in your family, you know."

"I'm sure it does not," said Lord Ryan, drawing up his tall and lithe figure with a touch of pardonable vanity. "It is a mere accident, I should say."

"It lies in the female side, depend on it," said Overdon; "and she will be like the rest, if she lives to that age."

"What do you mean? Are you afraid—have you reasons to suppose that she will not live to that age?"

"I sometimes think, Arthur, that she is not destined to live very long. Look at her to-night. You say she looks happy; I say she looks bright. Those flushed cheeks, those lustrous eyes, are not, I am afraid, a sign of longevity. Do you know what it means?"

"I know that it means happiness to me to see her so."

"Yes, but to her it means an artificial excitement, which cannot continue long, and is doing her harm. She has had this strange fit of depression; now she has this strange fit of gaiety."

"I explain that easily enough," said Lord Ryan gravely, as if doubting his own words. "She fancies, and I believe to some extent correctly, that her last marriage was ill-assorted. With all her intellect she has intense affection, and I guess that she was afraid she would never find a man whom she could really love. She has found one now, and consequently she is for the moment somewhat excited. There is no danger in that, surely."

"And who is this man?"

"He who is speaking to her now. I have not seen her converse with so much animation for a very long time."

"True, O King. And yet, did you notice how she sighed? There, do you see the expression of her face while she looks down and listens to that bright youth? Is that happiness?"

Lord Ryan sighed heavily. Just then the face of his child wore an expression which he dared not interpret.

"Do you mean to tell me that this is love?" continued Overdon. "Why, Margaret did not

look like that when we were spooning, and I am sure she was prosaic enough."

At that moment the mellow strains of a wald-horn, accompanied by a low murmur of strings, issuing from the leafy haunts of music, seemed to invite attention, and then, bursting forth into a waltz, played such havoc with conversation, and so electrified the driest bones of dancers past and present, that in a few moments everything was in a whirl. Lord Ryan had returned to the marquee which had been reserved for dancing, but Overdon remained with the intention of somewhat more narrowly watching his neice. She saw him, smiled, and taking the Earl's arm, went towards the marquee. At the entrance, as by previous arrangement, they separated, and in the crush and whirl Overdon lost sight of her.

He examined every corner of the tent and conservatory, he looked into some of the card-rooms, but she was nowhere to be found. With a knowing shake of the head and a smile on his lips, the lawyer complimented his "sly puss" on giving him the slip so cleverly. There was no doubt in his mind that she had arranged a *tête-à-tête* with the Earl—the more, as he saw that individual talking to a prosy ambassador with the utmost calm, as if he was now quite certain of success. Somewhat disappointed, and yet glad that matters had taken this turn, the counsel discreetly wandered away from

the gaieties of the world, and choosing a solitary path in the grounds that led to a little stone parapet at the water-side, indulged in the consumption of a fine havannah.

It was a favourite spot of his, and not easily found. The subdued sounds of music stole through the foliage, and were carried by the breeze across the water, and far away into the sleeping country. The sky over-head was studded with brilliants that eclipsed the lights of men, the ancient cedar had opened every pore, and was sending forth its fragrance into the night, and the comfortable legislator was meditating on the feasibility of annexing Cuba to the British Empire, when his ear caught a light footstep upon the gravel. He listened. Only one person; a female with a rustling dress, and not his wife. No one else but Eugenie knew of this little arbour. Could she have made her appointment here. He frowned, and being seated in the furthest corner, and concealed behind a branch of the tree, remained motionless. The light step advanced without hesitation; a lady in white entered the arbour, and although the night was warm and balmy, gave an involuntary shiver, and drew a fragile shawl more closely round her shoulders.

"Thank heaven! Alone at last," said she to herself, while leaning over the parapet and looking into the water. There was a sighing and whisper-

ing in the cedar overhead, as though that venerable native of Lebanon remembered the loveliest of a thousand queens. Two little ears listened, for they were fond of that kind of music, and they might have listened all night long, had not a faint whiff of havannah revealed the fact that her solitude was not as absolute as she had thought. She turned her head quietly in the direction.

"Is that you, Uncle Charles? It must be you, for nobody else knows this little place."

"Unless somebody has been told, Eugie. Shall I—hm—find it necessary to withdraw?"

"Withdraw? What for?" said she, seating herself by his side. "You know," she added, playfully, "nobody can stand those cigars but I."

"Eugie, my dear," said he earnestly, holding her hand, "this little hand is very hot; a good deal hotter than it was last night."

"The weather is a good deal hotter," said she; "and then that marquee has become almost unbearable."

"Shall I inform this little woman what that impetuous pulse tells me? Shall I frighten her by saying she is threatened with an attack of—heart disease?"

"Oh, how clever!" said she, with a laugh. "That's easy enough to tell. Didn't Sir John Brussell tell you that all our hearts were unsound?"

"Yes, but not at your age. It is only when people begin to think of dinners that your wise doctor was right."

"Then I am sure," said she, gaily, "I ought to be very ill; for the dinner that you enjoyed so heartily, sir, cost this little woman a fearful amount of thinking. Confess—you did enjoy it?"

"Verily, I did. It will be something to remember. You know I am not given to flattery, but I do most sincerely compliment you upon all your arrangements. The dinner would have graced the table of a duke."

"A duke," said she, somewhat contemptuously; "that means nothing. You know I despise all the dukes I have ever met."

"I was not aware of it," answered the lawyer. "Do you entertain the same feeling towards the lower grades—earls, for instance?"

Her hand remained perfectly calm in his, and although she waited some moments with her answer, there was nothing in her voice that could betray to the acutest of cross-examiners even the approach of emotion.

"Do you know," said she, pensively, "that there are earls whose great ambition it is to become dukes?"

The lawyer laughed heartily. "Oh, yes; plenty of them. And it is generally a hereditary family failing. To let you into a dreadful secret, your

aunt wanted me to forswear my principles for a baronetcy."

"I am not at all surprised. I can understand that, to a woman like aunt Margaret, rank must seem of very great importance. But can you understand that a man whom Heaven has endowed with great gifts, whose name is as historical as that of the dynasty, who has almost unmatched opportunities for exerting great and good influence, should consider a mere elevation of rank the just reward for his talents?"

"Why not?" said Overdon, airily, and knocking his ashes into the river below. "His conduct, Eugie, is not only very understandable, but it is absolutely biblical. You forget the parable of the good and faithful servant. He that had the most talents went and doubled them. Our reverend rector will tell you so. They are following out a noble precept."

"Will you never be serious, uncle?"

"I am serious enough in all conscience. The interpretation has always seemed to me that self-interest is the natural principle of action."

"And is that," cried Eugenie, "the only motive that must actuate a man who has scarcely a wish that was not fulfilled at his birth?"

"You need not ask me. You have seen quite as much of the world as I have. I only speak professionally."

"I can't believe it, uncle. At least not yet. I am still so young—so very young. I have often been told, and have often told myself, that I have seen much of the world, but I have in reality seen only a small portion of it."

"That's enough," said Overdon. "The multiples of equals are equal; and you will find the great natural principle pervading the universe."

"I can't believe it," exclaimed Eugenie, with warmth; "my instinct tells me you are wrong."

"There was a time when I thought otherwise, Eugie, and I acted on the unnatural principle once—but once only."

"And you succeeded?"

"I did not. I selected the biggest and most intelligent boy at the Malloy village-school in Ulster to pick stones off a certain field. I thought we were equally generous, and I promised him a big plate of potatoes after his work was done. He said he could do the work all the better if he had the praties first. Having had the praties, the natural principle of self-interest asserted itself—he picked off three stones and hooked it."

"And you?"

"Whereupon I became self-interested—hooked him—thrashed him, and made him do double work."

"You are laughing at me, I know," said Eugenie sadly; "but do you know that in the bloom of

youth it is hard to learn the wisdom of this natural principle, as you call it."

"I dare say it is, my dear girl," said Overdon gravely. "I found it very hard at first; but what then? In your position you should bow to the cause of success and happiness."

"Of all success? of all happiness? Is there no exception?"

"Not in this world. The natural principle alone leads to success, and except, for about four hours on Sundays, we are taught that success alone leads to happiness. Take your father—the best man I know. Full of schemes of philanthropy, full of benevolence, full of charity; but touch him on the interest of his class, and he is up in arms at once."

"It has made me very unhappy," said she sadly; "I feel as if the sun had gone out of my life."

"That will come back again if you do not shut yourself up. You are young and wealthy, and"—

"I ought to marry again, you would say. Do you know what I have vowed?"

"Ladies vow so much and so often."

"I have vowed only one thing, uncle—that I shall never marry any man whom I do not love with my whole soul."

"I consider the vow unpractical—it sounds like a foolish girl."

"I do not speak like a foolish girl—I know

the world enough for that; but I could not love any man who was actuated by your natural principle."

"Not even a man who was inspired by the lofty and laudable ambition of strawberry leaves?"

"I understand you. If Lord Burgos is what I have great reason to fear, love—nay, even respect—is out of the question."

"You know it would please Lord Ryan beyond anything."

"It could not please Lord Ryan to know that I was unhappy."

"But you told me that you are unhappy now. Your looks certainly have indicated it for some time."

"Not unhappy, my dear; but sad. I have been deeply sad. And can you wonder at it? To find among so many reasons for joy in a world so full of His loveliness and beauty, so little that is admirable and loveable. To find God's creatures driven by so hard and base a thing as this natural principle."

"Poor Eugie! It would be very much wiser to follow my wife's counsel, and marry some decent fellow."

"Never!" said she, with decision. "I should be happy to change my condition, but only if I found a man who could admire a heroic failure more than success. It seems that Walpole was

right, after all, when he said that all men have their price. If I can find no man who is absolutely without price, to whom the world holds nothing so dear as the interests of his fellow-creatures, I shall be infinitely happier as I am."

"And do you know what that entails?" asked the lawyer, who had listened attentively. "Do you know what the love of a man, like the one you describe, means?"

"I know what it ought to mean."

"It means that he would hold even you inferior to the public good; and that if he had to choose between the people and the wife he loved, he would choose the people."

"And the wife he loved would feel proud of him," said she.

"Hm. I have actually let my cigar go out. Give me a kiss, girl. You are like your mother."

CHAPTER XI.

COMING EVENTS.

THERE was a small group of men in one of the rooms, where the music scarcely penetrated, and the half-whispered tone of conversation could be easily understood. They were men of thoughtful mien, with an air of subdued authority, and that peculiar smile of gentlemanly defiance which is only cultivated on ministerial or opposition benches. With the exception of Lord Burgos, they were no longer of an age to recognize the light fantastic toe—it might be said that at their age it had become a principle to recognize nothing that was light and fantastic, unless it came to them in the shape of deputations, for they were men who had to grapple with budgets and statutes, and who knew that it was death to be caught tripping.

“How neatly Ryan does all these things,” said the Right Honourable Richard Florrynne, a humble

secretary of the Treasury; "he makes a most admirable entertainer."

"I am afraid you would find him a very uncomfortable colleague," said Sir John Brussell, the cynical physician of princes, and a prince among physicians; "he would upset your benches in a week."

"Why?"

"Because he considers good taste as a *sine qua non*. He does not believe in hideous utilities."

"The most hideous of which, I suppose, he considers such a thing as economy," said Serjeant Kleber, a shining legal light in the House. "All this must have cost him a lot of money."

"And I am told," said Colonel Fielding, "that although he has had the ordering of it all, the exquisite way in which everything has been arranged is entirely due to his graceful daughter, Mrs. Fairfax."

"Which I can most emphatically contradict," said the physician. "I had the honour of spending some very pleasant hours at Beecham with Mrs. Fairfax the day before yesterday, and I believe she only arrived here last night."

"Well, much may be done in a morning with plenty of smart and clever workmen," said the Colonel.

"Plenty of smart and clever workmen," said

Lord Burgos, with a laugh; "you speak like a soldier, Colonel."

"I hope so," replied that officer; "but I don't catch you."

"If Lord Ryan could have marched a regiment of your engineers into the Cottage, he might have arranged everything in a few hours. By what other means he could have got plenty of smart and clever workmen, I don't understand."

"I suppose," said Mr. Florrynne, "if he had given it into the hands of a good contractor, they would have been sent down. Our Treasury ball-room was completely transformed in four-and-twenty hours."

"I daresay it was;" said Lord Burgos, "but you must remember that was in London, and close to head-quarters. Here, twenty or thirty miles out of town, the matter is very different."

"There can't be much difference, except in the cost," said he of the Treasury; "and that would be no objection."

"There would be many other and very grave objections," answered the Earl. "What would you say, for instance, if you were told that your smart and clever workmen object to go such a distance out of town?"

"I would consider it monstrous," said the Right Honourable, with indignation. "Do you believe

that a workman would object to go wherever and whenever his master sent him?"

"Believe, by Jove!" cried Sir Marmaduke Underdown. "I believe anything of them, except that they are sober."

"I have seen them even in that condition, Sir Marmaduke," said the physician, sarcastically. "I remember one case in particular of a bricklayer who was a remarkable instance of coercion. I found him, with a very gouty constitution, drinking very old and heady port. I warned him of the fearful consequences, pictured the horrors of the disease, and he has actually left off and is again at work."

"Pah!" said Sir Marmaduke, whose port-wine complexion deepened a shade or two. "What nonsense! At work? What at?"

"Laying bricks, I suppose. I believe he laid several in one day; and I am convinced, from my own personal observations, that the consumption of port, and sherry, and champagne among the working-classes is very much on the decrease. I should say you can safely begin to legislate on the subject now."

"You talk of personal observation," said Sir Marmaduke. "Do you go into that neighbourhood much?"

"Into what neighbourhood?"

"Into the neighbourhood where they all live—

these working fellows. I suppose they all live together somewhere, don't they? They ought to."

"Yes," said the physician, with perfect gravity, "I do see a good deal of them one way and the other. I see them every day, of course, at the hospital; but I go into their neighbourhood, too, sometimes."

"I know you do, Sir John," said Lord Burgos, with some energy; "and I would ask you, as a man who is accustomed to weigh evidence and draw conclusions, is not your true working-man a sensual brute?"

"That, my dear Lord Burgos, is a term which science does not recognize. I appeal to Kleber, who is well up in medical jurisprudence. He will tell you that the wording of your question is extremely vague."

"It's not the first time you have slipped through a cross-examination," said Kleber, laughing; "but Lord Burgos means, I have no doubt, whether the working-man is not habitually given to gross indulgence."

"As a rule he is given to indulgence," answered the physician, "though it would be too much to say that it is habitually gross. He does indulge; but, then, the whole world does that."

"My dear Sir John," said the Earl, "I know you as a man of deep sympathies, and as one who

feels tenderly for respectable poverty. I honour you for it, and I think it right in everyone to cultivate that feeling. But when I talk of the working-classes I exclude those. I speak of the man who is no longer poor—the man who is at this moment agitating and brewing discontent, who is always ready for violence and braying for change. You are very well aware that things at this moment are far from tranquil in the country, and I ask you, as a man of profound knowledge of the subject—is your working-man a sensual or an intellectual being?”

“He is a very odd mixture of the two,” said the physician, with imperturbable gravity.

“No doubt he is,” continued the Earl. “Every man is more or less a mixture, and the more he is mixed the odder he becomes. But what I want to get hold of is this—what impresses him most, the sensual or the intellectual? what has the greatest influence on him—material comforts, or what I may call emotional comforts? In fine, Sir John, if it should come to an open declaration of war on their side—as it may, and before long, too—what would more easily appease them, an increased material or mental comfort?”

“I have not the slightest doubt that the material comfort would be the more powerful argument,” said the physician, who had listened to the young

leader with pleasure. "Are things getting so bad?"

"They are getting desperate," said Mr. Florrynne, "Between ourselves, of course — we have the gravest anticipations of disturbances in some of the country districts. The deuce take these fellows."

"They have actually been getting into a fever heat in one of your collieries, have they not?" asked Kleber.

"They have," said the Earl, with a smile; "but I believe I have found the remedy for their complaint."

"What have you given them?" asked Sir Marmaduke, who was also interested in the black diamond.

"A few crumbs of material comfort," said the Earl lightly, "and the fever forthwith left them."

"And I can't help thinking," said Mr. Florrynne, "that every one of these troublers could be dealt with in the same way. Their discontent can't be deep-seated, for London is comparatively tranquil."

"I suppose it is no longer a secret that my regiment is about to be sent into South Wales?" said Colonel Fielding.

"But it is still a secret that you will remain here," said the Earl. "Yes, Mr. Florrynne, you

may look. It has not yet been decided in the Cabinet Council, I know, but it will be, no doubt, at the one that is being held to-night."

"Why, what can be the matter?" said the Treasury man. "You are always finding some mare's nest, Burgos."

"I am only disturbing day-dreams," replied he haughtily—"dreams that seem indispensable to certain members of the Cabinet."

"Let members of the Cabinet take care of themselves," said Mr. Florrynne patronisingly. "We outsiders will never know what rules have to guide their conduct."

"I apprehend that you do not know the latest news, Mr. Florrynne. Have you heard the decision of the Great Brotherhood?"

"I am not in a position to answer your question," said Mr. Florrynne.

"You said that London was comparatively tranquil," said Lord Burgos cuttingly. "So it is at present. But I am advised that there is contemplated the most gigantic demonstration of this century, among other matters of grave import. I daresay it will be in the papers to-morrow. I am sure it is true."

"You will have to prepare several basketsful of your crumbs," said the physician.

"You exaggerate the matter out of all propor-

tion, my lord," said Mr. Florryne somewhat savagely.

"Its dem nuisance, anyhow," said Sir Marmaduke. "I suppose they will repeal that Criminal Law Amendment Act."

"Repeal!" exclaimed Earl Burgos, "never while we stand as we do. England loves not compulsion. That is no material comfort, Sir John; that belongs to the class of mentals. It is the only legitimate hold we have on them."

"Hear, hear—bravo!" said Sir Marmaduke, with enthusiasm, "that's the spirit I like to see. These milk-and-water Constitutionals, as they call themselves, are ready to give up everything at a moment's notice. You have the proper spirit. A firm hand on the reins, keep them in, whip them up, and the old coach'll go yet."

"Is this true?" said Lord Ryan, who had joined the group. "Is that the latest?"

"Perfectly true. The only question unsettled at present is whether the demonstration will take place before, during, or after the debate in our House. That man you admire so, Harrick, is one of the ringleaders."

"Is he, indeed? and what are the specific objects to be gained by this demonstration?"

"Oh, mob law, the charter, and a holiday, I suppose," cried Sir Marmaduke. "Ask Overdon."

He is hand-and-glove with them; he will know their entire programme."

"I have heard something about it," said Overdon, who had just come from the water-side, giving a slight wink to his friend Brussell. "I believe they are going in for the abolition of all peers and baronets, all lawyers, doctors, soldiers, and parsons, and the immediate establishment of the millenium."

"My learned friend is well at ease," said Sergeant Kleber, "because he knows he is safe in their hands."

"Gentlemen," said Lord Ryan gravely, "do you think that these men would be so foolish as to leave their work and spend their time in anxious discussion unless they had a real point to gain?"

"Unfortunately, my lord," said Burgos significantly, "they know that a certain class of philanthropists are only too eager to assist them at the expense of society at large. My respect for you, sir, controls my displeasure; but your act last night, in the present condition of affairs, and in the presence and at the suggestion of that man Harrick, will do us incalculable harm. We shall have to prepare for bitter and strenuous opposition."

"Would it not, perhaps, be better to hear what they really have to say?" said Lord Ryan.

“Meet them with a smile, when they are ready to assault us!” cried Sir Marmaduke.

“Why not, brother? ‘A soft answer turneth away wrath.’”

CHAPTER XII.

ON THE LAWN.

FATHER and daughter were alone. The Cottage had once more lapsed into its usual verdant tranquillity, and lay smiling under the glorious summer sky. The guests had departed—the majority at an early hour in the morning following the ball, although by dint of good management Lord Ryan had prepared accommodation for all. The Countess of Burgos had been amongst the last to leave, but she had considered it her duty to follow her son up to London. It was the first time since the death of her husband that Lady Burgos had left her quiet retreat at Herron Hall, and she frankly confessed to Eugenie that the change was not much to her liking. But her son had represented to her the great advantage which her presence in London would have for him, and for his sake she consented to resume some of the splendour which she had gladly renounced for the rest of her days.

"I hope we shall see much of each other, my dear," she said to Eugenie, while affectionately patting her hand. "I know I am an old woman, and dreadfully dull; but when I have you by my side, I almost fancy I could talk to you as to my own daughter."

"You are very kind," answered Eugenie. "It would have been such pleasure to me to have you here for some days at least. You know, Lady Burgos, I do not like going up to London."

"Neither do I, child; but what must, must, I suppose. Fancy leaving all this lovely green and this splendid blue sky for never ending bricks and smoke? But there is one comfort: our windows all look out into the Park—at least mine do; and I shall have an entirely separate establishment. John insisted on it. He has made considerable alterations in our house in Park Lane, and I am afraid I shall not see as much of him as if I remained here. So you must come often and cheer me up."

"I am afraid I am a very poor hand at cheering," said Eugenie simply. "I never laugh much."

"But it is your bonny eyes that cheer me, child. And not *me* only," said the Countess significantly, as she stepped into the carriage that was to drive her to the station. Eugenie looked

after the vehicle until it swept round the curve of the approach and disappeared, and went with somewhat pensive mien through the conservatory into the garden. It was one of her fancies on a summer day to turn gipsy, as she called it, and live in the open. One of the cedars immediately in front of the library window was so grown that, by means of some canvas, a couple of screens, and the necessary couches and easy chairs, a most delicious and luxurious tent could be fitted up. There was from this point a full view of the river, and it was here that Eugenie had taken her books, and was industriously writing her letters, when Lord Ryan, who had accompanied his last guest to the station, returned. His step was soft upon the mossy grass, and as he approached noiselessly [he could see on his daughter's face an expression of pleasure, almost of glee, as she sat biting the tip of her quill, which somewhat surprised him.

"If you are writing to Dr. Plumper, Eugie," he said quietly, "I should like to enclose a few words."

"No. I was not writing to him," said she, with a slight start. "But I intend to. I forgot to tell you that he requested me particularly to remind you of your promise to lend him those books on Jerusalem. He is getting quite excited about the eternal city, and has even bothered his

old friend Mr. Sutton about it—as he told me last night.”

“That is exactly what I wished to write to him about. I find I am not so rich in books on that subject as I thought. But I will let him have all I possess. You know he proposed a joint tour?”

“Did he?” replied Eugenie, abstractedly. “You would find him a most delightful companion. I shall be glad for his sake, though it will be a pity to lose him for so long.”

“But it was part of our plan that you should go with us,” said Lord Ryan, seating himself on a low chair.

“That I should go with you?” repeated his daughter, her face lighting up with pleasure. “A trip to the East with my darling father, of all things in the world. When do you intend starting?”

“Some time in September. You must consult Brussell whether your health will permit it. We shall probably spend the winter in Rome. There will be plenty of time for you to get a companion—for I should advise one.”

“Of course. Uncle Charles has been at too much pains to explain the position of a *feme sole* for me to go alone. But I shall not want to choose long, unless you object to Katherine.”

“Your mysterious companion at Beecham? The little I saw of her pleased me very much.”

"But why do you call her mysterious?"

"Oh, only because Plumper dropped something about a curious history connected with her. Do you know it?"

"I know part of it. But she is very sensitive, and I never cared to press her. I know she has had deep sorrow."

"I judged so from her look. But it is odd that you should know so little about one so young, so reticent, and a widow with a strange history. I should have advised somewhat more circumspection."

"Which you will never get women to practise. You know it all came about very simply. When I spoke to Dr. Plumper about coming to live at Beecham for some time, he said he knew a lady, very well connected and highly educated, who just wanted a situation as companion—more as an asylum than as a means of earning her livelihood, for she has sufficient to live on. He vouched for her respectability. In fact, she is his niece. I saw her just after she had recovered from an illness. She looked so delicate and sorrowful that I liked her instantly, and have gone on liking her ever since. She is a dear, affectionate creature, and loves me like a sister."

"And you consider her education such, that she could appear in your set?"

"Quite. She is *parfaitement distinguée*, although her education must have been very one-sided."

"Then why not bring her with you to London. I am sure she will be welcome?"

"I know she would. And I have asked her frequently. But she has her own reasons for remaining quiet at present."

"And you fill up the blank by correspondence. There must be something very attractive in this lady, for your friendship for women as a rule is not very deep, Eugie."

"There is something very attractive in her," said Mrs. Fairfax, with a smile, "but I am puzzled to know what it is."

"Your correspondence evidently is of an amusing character. You looked quite your old self just now," said Lord Ryan.

"I was only explaining some stupid politics to her, which she finds very puzzling. You may read the letter, and tell me whether you think my explanation is correct."

Lord Ryan took the letter with a smile, put on a pair of eye-glasses, and read:—

"THE COTTAGE, THAMESTONE,

"June 15.

"DEAREST KATHERINE,

"Before I leave this lovely spot for unlovely London, I must let you know in a few words how I have fared. I completed the journey

from Beecham in less time than I imagined, so that I arrived here rather early, and found my Aunt Overdon in possession. She did not seem quite as pleased with my coming as she might have been, and I do not wonder at it, for she knows that when I am at home, I do not allow anybody but myself to look after the household, which fact, like a sensible woman, she quietly acknowledged by handing me over the keys. She was, as usual, dressed in the most bizarre and out-of-the-way fashion you could possibly conceive, and being a little embonpoint—a good deal I ought to say—and having a tolerably high colour, you may imagine the effect of a mixture of violet and green.

“Shortly after my arrival came Lady Burgos, whom my father had especially invited to welcome me. She is the most perfect specimen of an old lady I have ever seen, or ever care to see. Her hair is the most purely snowy silver that you can imagine, all rippling, and as soft as silk. She must have been a lovely woman at one period of her life, for although she is over sixty, there are still indications of great beauty. Deep and tender eyes, and a voice as clear as crystal, and yet low and sweet, with a peculiarly charming laugh that quite took my heart, would in themselves be enough to have made her a fine old lady; but the ease and dignity of her behaviour, the style of her still imposing figure, her wit and humour, and

above all, her kindness, were quite charming. On the evening of the ball—which, by-the-bye, Lord Ryan got up as a surprise to me—she wore the most magnificent lace I ever saw in my life. She seemed quite pleased with my admiration of it—and said with some pride, that it was made from a design of her own. It certainly was lovely, and I got her permission to copy it and get some made at the address she gave me. I enclose the directions, which you can try your hand at. Only you must take care to work it with an alternate double and treble thread.

“Yes, my dear papa had prepared a surprise for me, which nearly took my breath away. Everything had been ordered from London, and I had no sooner arrived than I was called upon to issue my commands, like a general who arrives just as the battle is beginning. Happily, Lord Ryan understands that business better than any man in the kingdom, and all I had to do was to use my common-sense. I flatter myself we had a success. There were about two hundred guests, just enough, and a splendid band, and the best set of servants that Mr. Bakewell has at his disposal; and everything went off so nicely that I was complimented by that prosiest of men, Mr. Richard Florryne. And not only did I find myself suddenly plunged into a whirl of amusement, but also into a whirl of politics. It appears

that my kind, good, generous father has exasperated several of the Tory leaders by his conduct the other night at Thamestone.

“Being at the opening of a Working-Men’s Club which he had built, advanced the money, and let the ground for—he being the principal landowner—there seemed to be a spirit of sulkiness among the members of the Club, probably because they were ashamed of themselves. It appears that some London workman, one of the Trades’ Union leaders, was present, made a rather violent speech, called upon the men to subscribe the money, buy both building and ground from Lord Ryan, and be beholden neither to him nor to any of the gentlemen who had formed themselves into a patronage committee. This speech was received with enthusiasm by the men, and Lord Ryan, in answer, promised to sell the land and building as soon as he got a decent security.

“This has raised the violent indignation of all the members of this committee, except Mr. Overdon, my uncle, who, as you know, is a very advanced Radical. Lord Burgos in particular is very indignant. He says he cannot understand any landlord parting with his land, and especially to the people. He almost speaks as if he had been born with land, and has to take a large quantity with him when he dies. He is respectful to Lord Ryan, but, as he told me privately, deeply con-

cerned about the consequences of this act. You know that the country is unsettled, but it seemed to be a great deal more so than we imagined.

"Just before the Whitsuntide recess a bill was brought into the Lower House for the abolition of the Criminal Law Amendment Act, and the working-men seem to have set their heart upon its passing. They think the Commons will yield, though reluctantly; but they suspect, and I think with reason, that there will be a formidable opposition in the Lords. Lord Burgos told me he will stake his reputation on its being thrown out, and though my uncle thinks the consequences will be very serious, he expects the same.

"There are a great many other and minor reasons for discontent among them, such as the inequality of taxation, the fearful state of the Poor Law—and there are, as usual, schemes more or less wild, and more or less unreasonable—but the repeal of this Act is, I believe, the great bone of contention. Lord Ryan says that the London working-men are preparing for a tremendous demonstration, and it is not at all certain that they won't go on to violence. What makes it worse is that one of the foremost leaders in this movement is that man Harrick, whose speech you remember Dr. Plumper read out to us from the 'Anthill,' and which we both liked so much. And he is the very man who spoke last Tuesday

evening at that club. Now the House meets again for business next Monday, but this bill won't come on until the Monday after, and then it will be at least a fortnight before it is sent up to the Lords; and I suppose Lord Ryan will be very busy all that time. As I intend to help him, and do a lot of hard work, you must not expect any letters from me; but let me have as many from you as you like to write. It will cheer me up, and relieve me.

I should, above all things, like you to send me occasional pages out of your diary. Do not fear to write in them anything, however secret, or however alluding to former events, for whatever you write shall be read by my eyes alone, and never communicated. Kiss little Maud for me, and tell her I should so like to get a letter from my little sister. I write to Dr. Plumper tomorrow.

"Yours ever affectionately,

"EUGENIE FAIRFAX."

Lord Ryan read the letter leisurely, and laid it down with a smile.

"You girls have an odd way of mixing up petticoats and politics."

"But I have not explained it so very badly," said she, "considering that I have been away so long."

"Not at all. You have stated the matter very correctly. It is very odd that you should take such an interest in this."

"Why?"

"Because I have asked this very man Harrick to call on me, and he has let me know that he will be here this morning. I am expecting him."

"How funny!" cried Eugenie. "I shall so like to see a demagogue."

"I intended receiving him in my study; but he can come here if you like."

"By all means. I can write my letters and work and listen while you talk to him. But don't let him be violent."

"Here comes James to announce him," said Lord Ryan.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE NEW CREED.

EUGENIE looked towards the house with some curiosity, for she had made to herself an odd picture of this much-bespoken stranger. He was connected in her mind with a swagger and a look of insolence, possibly a red nose and somewhat blood-shot eyes, a wild beard and slovenly apparel. She was still expecting him when the figure of a man appeared within a few paces of her, and politely raised his hat. He had evidently entered the garden through the side entrance. His approach had been concealed by the screen, his steps softened by the grass. With one quick look, scarcely knowing whether to acknowledge the salute or not, she saw before her something so entirely different from her imagination that she could scarcely believe her senses. She had intended using her eyeglass, narrowly to examine the peculiarities of "the creature," and she caught herself looking, not without pleasure, at the figure

of a young man, who was tall, strong, and not ill favoured, who was dressed somewhat oddly, but with great neatness, and who carried himself with an air of perfect composure. She blushed, and, without answering the salute, turned to her letters and her books.

"I am glad you have come," said Lord Ryan, rising politely and pointing to a chair. "I was very much afraid that your occupation would have prevented you, or that you might have returned to London."

"I have come from London this morning," answered Harrick, seating himself, "but I was very anxious to respond to your invitation, because I have been informed that the few remarks I made on that evening have offended you. You will believe that nothing was further from my intention."

"Mr. Sawder, or whoever brought you my invitation, must have done his work very badly," said Lord Ryan, "for I never told any one that I was offended. I could not have been so, although I cannot deny that your speech has given offence to more than one gentleman on the platform."

"I am sorry for that," said Harrick, quietly. "If I have said anything that is untrue or unjust I am quite ready to apologise as publicly as I have offended. In the same place, if you desire it, and before the same people."

"You may not have been absolutely unjust or untrue," said Lord Ryan, smiling, "but you may have been harsh and hasty in your condemnation, and, perhaps, wanting in respect to those who, in virtue of their position and calling, are entitled to respect. However, personally I have nothing to complain of. You roused the members to a sense of their position, and I shall be happy if they can subscribe the sum."

"I am very much afraid they won't, my lord. Thamestonians are dreadfully apathetic."

"We have just come to the conclusion that some of that apathy would greatly improve the London workmen—and some of the provincials too. The fact is, Mr. Harrick, it was on this very subject that I desired to speak with you. You will not deny that the condition of England at present is not so tranquil or satisfactory as it might be."

"Unfortunately it is not," answered the artisan, "and none deplore it more than ourselves."

"If that be so, can you suggest a remedy? As one of the intelligent men among the working classes, can you point me out the real cause of this incessant trouble?"

"The immediate cause of the agitation of course you know yourself," replied the proletarian. "The absolute necessity we feel of having the Criminal Labour Laws amended or repealed."

"But do you flatter yourself with the hope that, when all has been done in that direction that can possibly be done, agitation will for evermore subside?"

"Not at all," said Harrick frankly, "it will only be one step gained. A step, it is true, that has become necessary; nay, even indispensable, but not by any means the only one."

"Then, if this be the first step, can you indicate which will be the last? Can you, as one of the leaders of the popular movement, give me an idea what further demand will be made, and when?"

"When, is a thing no man can decide. But the progress is so slow and so impeded, that unless things come with a rush at the last, I think we may look forward to many centuries of struggle."

"Many centuries of struggle!" echoed Lord Ryan. "Struggle for what?"

"For equality."

"My good sir, I had hoped that such men as you had risen superior to that delusion. Are you going to adopt a catchword which has lost its charm for the most riotous Parisian gamin? I am surprised you do not add the two others, 'Liberty and Fraternity.'"

"I do not add them," answered Harrick, "because we have them already. Two of the three dreams of the French Revolution have become

realised in England at least. We have our Brotherhood, and we enjoy perfect liberty with one exception, and that we are now fighting to get wiped out."

"And you imagine that your little clique which you call Brotherhood is a realization of the dream of the encyclopædists, that fraternity of man which will end all strife?"

"The Great Brotherhood of Labour is no little clique, my lord," said Harrick gravely. "It comprises nine-tenths of the English workmen of every kind and degree. We reckon our numbers by millions, and we have in so far realised the dream of the encyclopædists, that we are united in one harmonious bond to the furtherance of one great aim."

"And is that aim the lamentable chimera of equality? Are you serious, Mr. Harrick?"

"That aim, sir, is equality, and in my humble opinion it is no chimera. Those working-men who view the world in relation to themselves have long since come to the opinion that equality of property, of wealth, of station, and of birth, are things which nothing on this earth will give us, and even if given could never be maintained. We, the highly skilled artisans, feel it the more because we stand midway between employers and employed, and feel that at least equality of talent, energy, and health, can never exist."

"I am anxious to know what your equality can mean," said Lord Ryan.

"It means equality of burden. He that has nothing to bear, let him carry the heaviest weight; and he who is bowed down with every possible load, let him be relieved and lightened. If this be a chimera, my lord, it is one the theoretical justice of which you will be the last to deny. It is our aim—distant, I daresay; impossible at present—but still an aim, which we have adopted as our new creed and gospel: 'To make labour less irksome, and luxury less easy;' and we believe that the phrase contains everything which we and our successors can fight for. When we have arrived at that period at which it is impossible to say which is least agreeable, labour or leisure, the incessant struggles of the present day will cease."

He had spoken with quiet and grave determination, as a man who was full of a great and difficult subject, and Lord Ryan had listened with growing interest. Mrs. Fairfax, leaning back in her chair, engaged in embroidery, followed the argument with equal attention, wondering at times where this child of the people could have found his correctness of expression and justness of thought, and above all, that musical and resonant voice which reminded her of the Swiss mountain echoes. She was dimly aware that his eyes strayed towards her occasionally,

notwithstanding his pre-occupation, but she did not consider that very unnatural, nor, as they were immediately averted, very displeasing.

"Your equality is not so absurd as I had at first imagined," said Lord Ryan, after a moment's thought. "I still consider it chimerical, but it is at least harmless. Have you any idea how to set about it?"

"It would take up too much of your time to go into that," replied the artisan; "but it must be obvious to you that taxation is one of the means. I walked from Thamestone this morning, and I must have passed through thousands of acres that are used for mere pleasure grounds—for the recreation of great landowners. Now, our principle is that these matters should be left entirely undisturbed. If a wealthy man desires to keep his land unproductive, he shall be allowed to do so; but he shall pay so high a price for it that, by relieving the landless classes of their principal burdens, he shall allow them to share some of his pleasure. We are determined to make his luxury less easy, although I have no doubt it will take generations to effect this. We do not believe in the abolition of royalty, or the abolition of the army and navy. These matters, although not trifling, come scarcely under our consideration; but the proletarians of this generation have come to the conclusion that for one part of the race to live in


unremitting toil and the other part in unbroken leisure, is a state of things that can be remedied. Toil, sir, is the natural burden imposed upon our first parent and upon all his race, and it is mainly by accident that so many are exempt. To shift this burden from the weakest shoulders on to the strongest is, in my humble opinion, a noble object of contention."

"It is an object, Mr. Harrick, which is so far removed from our present state, that it is scarcely any use discussing it," said Lord Ryan, somewhat wearily, "and you will pardon me for saying that I do not think you have solved the question at present in agitation."

"You requested me to state my views, my lord," said Harrick, "and I have endeavoured to explain those of myself and my friends. We believe that this struggle for equality underlies all discontent and agitation, although the parties actually engaged may not know it. It certainly underlies the present agitation."

"And here, having a real tangible difficulty before you, what do you propose?"

"We propose that the bill for repeal now before the House should pass, and have a fair trial. Indeed it has been resolved at the Council, as you have probably seen in the 'Weathercock,' that a demonstration will be immediately held to promote its passage."



"It is these very demonstrations that disturb us so. They cannot be allowed to take place. They are sure to lead to riot and breach of the peace."

"Not at all, my lord. We shall take care of that. But, granting that disturbance may result, it is thought better that you should be disturbed than that we should remain liable to be treated as felons."

"That is putting it with ridiculous harshness," replied Lord Ryan somewhat impatiently. "You know very well that men like myself view any use of the prison with abhorrence. But, after much thought, I have come to the conclusion that it is the only hold which a master can have on his men for observance of contract."

"And what a hold!" exclaimed Harrick, with animation. "I am one of the sufferers, my lord; and I will give you my case. It is an extreme one, I admit, and I have never quoted it in any argument; but it is one that has made me flush and burn with indignation. Through my own folly—partly ignorance, partly necessity—I entered into an engagement with my present employer for ten years at a stated wage. It was about as bad as enlisting, but I had no choice. Circumstances have altered. What was tolerable then is now to me a most oppressive burden, which I would break at any price that I can honestly pay. Do

you know, sir, that the iron hand of the law holds me chained? I cannot get away. My employer has it in his power to drain me and my friends of every penny; and supposing I continue to absent myself, or refuse to work, he can cast me into jail, to be the companions of felons and rogues of every degree. Is not that hard?"

"It is a very extreme case," said Lord Ryan—"one which I have never heard equalled."

"Perhaps not; but I assure you I am correct. And though this may be an extreme case, there are some not very different from mine. Do you think we can rest before this is altered? What have I done that I should be made the companion of outcasts and felons?"

"The case is hard, I admit," answered Lord Ryan. "Have you studied this question well?"

"I have studied it in all its bearings," said Harrick.

"I am in hopes of being able to effect some compromise," said the peer; "for I need not tell you that the opposition to the repeal will be very strong in our House. Would you accept a compromise?"

"It is impossible for me to say."

"If you could choose some one member of your Brotherhood, who is most informed and most influential in this question, could you bring him to some mutual place of meeting? I shall endeavour

to bring some of my influential friends, and we may perhaps hit upon some solution."

"Without prejudicing us in anything to which we may have been pledged—or binding us?"

"Without prejudice or promise. We meet as equals—shall we say in my house in Rufus Square?"

"Is it very grand?" asked Harrick with a smile.

"It is very quiet," answered Lord Ryan, with another. "Let us say to-morrow week at three."

The young man rose, bowed gravely, and withdrew.

CHAPTER XIV.

IN LAMBETH.

HALL MASON AND Co., established A.D. 1750, had, in the course of the hundred years or so of their existence, expressed the sorrows and hopes of mankind in a hundred different ways. Sometimes in poetry, sometimes in prose, occasionally in a happy mixture, there was always about the monuments and tombstones of Mason and Co., that air of whimpering gentility that spoke of polished oak and brass nails, or black kids, and three pair and feathers. Subdued gentility had been the policy of the family from its first appearance on the mundane stage in an independent character, and for a century previous the progenitors had, on principle, studied and followed the fashion of the day. The original Mason was supposed to have been a hanger-on at the court of Charles I., who, in the days of Cromwell, had become so truly Puritan, that he not only had himself named Hallelujah

Mason, but provided in his will for the perpetuation of that name in the heir.

The founder of the firm was known to have worn the garb of mourning as a matter of business, and to have mixed up in his phraseology as much of the burial service as he found practicable. He was a shrewd man. He left his clients unlimited choice. Broken hearts could bleed in Gothic, sorrowing eyes might weep in Mediæval, beloved ones could lie and leave friends to sigh in plain Latin; but our worthy friend Hallelujah took care that sorrow should be kept strictly within decorous, conventional limits. As he also took care to apply as much taste as was compatible with a contempt for the things of this world, Mason and Co. flourished like a fig-tree, and the next generation began to discover that it was not bereavement alone that paid, and that the preparation of such durable property, as copies of ancient statues, medallions and reliefs, elaborate festoons and decorative garlands, was quite compatible with the shortness of life.

Mason and Co., while still considering the monumental portion of the business the pillar of support, had gone in for general decorations, and had flourished as fig-trees seldom do. But it had come to be acknowledged that English workmen, who had never left the native soil, could not hold their own against Frenchmen, Italians, and Germans,

and in the course of years, the yard of Mason and Co. had assumed a somewhat cosmopolitan and polyglot character. There were so many different languages, such various casts of face, such individual types of nationality, that amidst the disorderly and irregular mass of stonework with which the yard was filled, one might have been excused for thinking that these modern children of Noah were endeavouring to rebuild the tower of Babel.

To a man with an observant eye, this yard of Mason's was certainly one of the most lively places in the entire metropolis. It was picturesquely situated on the bank of a river, and at foot of a range of lofty heights. It was bordered on the west by a smiling creek, containing valuable specimens of anthracolite and rich with alluvial deposit. It was bordered on the east by another smiling creek, which conveyed to the river the coloured waters of a subterranean spring.

Such possibly might have been the description of Messrs. Nockem and Down; but as sober sense beheld it, Mason's yard was backed by four huge gasometers of the Royal Gas Company. The one creek was at high water crowded with coal barges, and at low tide choked with slime. The other belonged to the owners of adjoining dyeworks, who had furtively converted it into an outlet for the factory water that was too foul to go down the sewer. Between these two slimy

arms Father Thames had, as it were, drawn Hallelujah Mason and Co. on to his dirty bosom, and it almost looked as if he had done it with a jerk, for the yard had the appearance of just coming out of an earthquake.

There was a multitude of slabs, tumbling over and on to each other in all directions; there were pillars with broken tops; there were urns surmounted by veils; there were lions couchant, lions rampant, and a host of petrified animals; gods and goddesses in every stage of undress—some half-finished, as if they had changed their minds in the midst of transmutation—others having assumed a garment of moss, the growth of years, or turned patchy with age and exposure—as if their indignation were bursting out in a rash—some upright, some half falling, and all in a confused and confusing disorder that added not a little to the charm of the scenery. What was seen outside at the river front was not, perhaps, more than a tenth part of what was actually on the premises; but it was stowed away in such odd corners, unexpected cellars and subterranean passages, that half the workmen on the place did not know the amount of stock.

It was altogether an odd place—this yard. It had been part of an ancient convent long since swallowed up; and soon after the establishment of the firm it had been found necessary to raise

the level of the yard half-a-dozen feet, in order to enable vessels to unload with ease. The result had been a conglomeration of arches and underground masonry with which few were conversant. There was always a fluctuation in this yard. Strange faces were continually arriving; old ones were dropping away. It had a reputation of its own in all the capitals of Europe for fair pay; and Mason and Co. could always find hands enough for any pressing job. Yet there was always an amount of latent discontent and mutinous ill-will among the men, that had more than once seriously embarrassed the firm, and brought upon them no small amount of annoyance.

This morning the non-contents seemed to have it all their own way. Notwithstanding the magnificent breeze and the joyful summer in the sky, there was gloom and sulk written on the faces of those who worked in silence, or who stood in small groups, debating their grievances with the vivacity of their races. The stalwart form of Harrick, appearing among them suddenly, caused a sensation. There was something in his erect carriage, the elevation of his head, the gravity of his eye, and the smile and nod wherewith he greeted every man he passed—that had already made him the idol as he was the leader of those around him.

“Lieber-guter Harrick!” exclaimed the bearded

German Steinman. "You have just come at the right moment. It really cannot go on any longer like this. We must come to open war."

"I thought there was something amiss," said he. "The old story. Let us hear what has been doing in my absence."

So invited, Steinman began in his native tongue, and was immediately assisted by a Frenchman and an Italian in their own tongues. Other men issued from different parts of the works, until Harrick became the centre of a group, out of which he rose from his shoulders upwards. While thus, a door opened in a wooden house that stood in the further corner of the yard, and the grisly face of an elderly man looked out upon the scene—looked out, and finding Harrick so surrounded, smiled a grim smile and disappeared.

"Look here, boys," said Harrick, good-humouredly, "I can't hear all at the same time. You speak, Steinman."

"I'll speak one great oath, if this longer goes on," said Steinman, with clenched fist. "This morning our breakfast was as dirty—as fish, and quite late. We must strike, indeed, Harrick; we must. If these men had any pluck in them they would not stand it; and now they are being treated like slaves."

"Yes," cried Jean Pierre, "slaves; and worse than slaves. Mon Dieu, that one man, or a couple

of men and an old woman, should have the power to interfere with us like this! I should not mind setting fire to the infernal shop."

"I see what it is," said Harrick, with a nod. "Biddy, instead of improving as she promised, has become dirtier and more drunken than ever, and necessarily the only thing you fellows can think of is either to strike or to set fire to the place. You have no idea of trying useful remedies. The only thing you can do is to fly to extremities."

"You know we have tried patience and remonstrance often and long enough," said Steinman.

"Patience and remonstrance! I am not talking of them. You have, of course, tried Ververt?"

"Ververt is a fool and an idiot," cried Pierre. "He is the tyrant. He says she does well enough, and won't stir."

"And you, of course, are perfectly helpless. How is it that you fellows understand even less about yourselves than Englishmen do? How is it that when you are opposed by a mere handful of authority you immediately go to the wall and get crushed? Do you not know that you are stronger than Mason and Ververt put together?"

"I know it," murmured Jean Pierre. "We'll pull their house about their ears one of these days."

"We'll do nothing of the kind," said Harrick, sternly. "But we'll have our way in spite and

independently of them. Now listen to me. I have got a secret friend, who delights in this kind of thing, and who will help us. Everyone of you knows him, and yet none of you have ever seen him, and none of you have ever trusted him. If you fellows had not been so utterly helpless in the face of a small patch of power I would have told you his name. But now I shall wait until that friend has helped us a little. In the meantime will you trust me for a week? It is now Saturday morning. By next Saturday morning all this will be completely changed, and I'll introduce you to my friend."

The men listened to this speech in silence, for they knew the character of the speaker. He had a scornful way of taunting them with their powerlessness and their want of management that was not pleasant to hear; but there was truth in it, cold and trenchant as the blade of a knife, but true as the purest steel, and the knowledge that it was so kept them silent. One by one, although muttering or asking him a few questions, they dropped off to their different corners, and Harrick, left alone, turned to the house.

The warehouse of Mason was a portion of the old convent. Its outer walls were as massive as those of a fortress, the partitions between the rooms as stout as modern outer walls, and the beams of solid oak that supported each floor

looked as though they would last for ever. The ground floor was very spacious. The front part of it—that which faced the gas works on the other side of the road—was partitioned off into a counting-house and a so-called pattern-room, where patterns of various styles were kept for the use of visitors. The back part of the house was entirely devoted to the use of the men employed in the yard.

It was a growth of later years. Mason and Co. had found that their men expected to have some place assigned to them where they could cook their meals and eat them too if they liked, and it had been found expedient to give up the back premises for this purpose. There was a kitchen running into a sort of mess-room, the furniture in which consisted of a long deal table and a number of chairs. Into this Harrick walked from the yard, and nearly slipped down over a large patch of grease near the door. The windows had remained closed; the air was impure.

There were some dirty dishes upon part of the table. He took up a corner of the cloth. It almost stuck to his hand—full of holes and grease as it was. The knives were rusty with want of cleaning. The dishes contained something he did not care to investigate. The walls, the windows, the seats, everything showed signs of dirt and filth. A bitter expression came over Harrick's face.

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"I don't wonder," he muttered, "that the men prefer to pay double outside." He felt as if the beauty of the glorious morning had been blotted out, and with a frown he stepped into the kitchen. Before a huge fire, in an enormous grate, crouched the woman, Biddy Malone, upon whose shoulders the cares of a household rested.

CHAPTER XV.

THE GREAT SERVANT.

HARRICK paused for a moment to contemplate the wretched spectacle before him. Biddy by some means had provided herself with one of those high-backed chairs whither club-porters and door-keepers are seen to retire for the greater part of their lives; and, imitating their example, she had sat down before the huge fire and was sound asleep. Harrick looked at the dishevelled hair, the wrinkled and flushed cheeks, the lean and restless hands, the untidy and dirty garments, the unwashed, unbleached, and undarned stocking, and the boot without heel; and as he saw these a look of disgust passed over his face, and he muttered, "Drink again!" He advanced and seized her roughly by the arm.

"Biddy, you dirty thing, what are you about? You'll set yourself on fire presently."

Biddy looked up with drowsy eyes, and silently stared at him.

"It's yourself, thin," said she at last, though without changing her posture. "You've been after comin' back, have ye?"

"And high time too, I should think. Did you not promise me to clean this place a bit. You are dirtier than ever."

"Arrah, thin," said Biddy, straightening herself, "it's thim pigs of forinners that are after making the muck—and they can clane it."

"These pigs, as you call them, are clean enough at home, and very angry with you. You must clean this place, Biddy."

"And I won't thin—there. It's no use when they come crashing, as they call it, all over the floor, and insulting a poor woman like meself—and, bedad, the mother of the boy that's going to be prisident ov' the States, too. Drat them."

"Have they been insulting you? What have they done?"

"They tell me I'm after dhrinkin'; and sorrah a dhrop I've had this week, exceptin' whin I have the toothache."

"And what would Mike say if he saw his old mother like this, Biddy? Wouldn't you like to go over to him, now?"

Biddy seemed somewhat puzzled with this question, and stared at him.

"I mean it, Biddy. Would you like to go to Mike?"

"Ye mane it? Oh ye divvel! It's fun ye're having wid a poor woman like meself;" having said which, Biddy threw a dirty apron over her head, ostensibly to hide her tears, but in reality to amend the untidiness of her hair and her dress, of which the glances of Harrick had somehow made her conscious.

"I mean it honestly, Biddy," said Harrick, with a faint smile. "Now what would it take you to go out there?"

"Is it in raisin' ye are, ye divvel?" said she quickly, glancing at him over her apron.

"I am perfectly in earnest."

"Faith, then, ye're a broth of a boy. It's Mike himself has been sendin' me five pounds, and Father O'Foggarty's got that same."

"Except what you've taken from it for whisky to-day."

"And how could ye be knowin' that now? I've got a divvel of a tooth that's kept me awake all the night."

"Never mind your tooth. We'll say that you have four pound ten. Supposing I manage to get you another two pound ten, that would make seven pounds in all. Would you go for that?"

"And lave them dhirty spalpeens? That I would, at onst. I'll be off to-day. I'll go and pack my things."

Harrick laughed, for although Biddy had fre-

quently threatened to pack up her things, nobody had ever seen anything belonging to her except the clothes she had on, an old pipe, some tobacco, and a very dilapidated shawl.

"We are not in such a tremendous hurry as all that, Biddy," said he, restraining her with one hand.

"I thought you'd be after deluding a poor owld woman like meself."

"Not at all. You will be able to go in a week from this moment—I promise you—but first of all you must clean this place thoroughly from one end to the other, and make every corner of it nice and sweet. You must, during the week, cook as well as you can; and if Mason or Ververt want to keep you here——"

"Want to keep me here," said Biddy, angrily seizing the poker. "Arrah, now, I should like to see them at it."

"Very well, then. You promise to speak to nobody—be as clean as you can, and as early—and you'll go to Mike."

"And may the everlastin' saints bless yer darlin' sowl," said Biddy with fervour, and shaking the drowsiness and the drink off her like a spaniel that has left the water.

"Mason has not come yet, I suppose?" asked Harrick, turning round to go.

"Mason has not come yet, and won't come yet.

He's always bein' late now," said Biddy, pinning up her hair.

"Then, if he asks for me, tell him I'm working with Ververt in the modelling-room. If he wants me he can come for me there. Tell him that too, if you like."

Harrick retraced his steps out of the kitchen and through the mess-room. Again the dirty smell and the look of greasy uncleanness of the place smote him with oppression, and as he re-entered the yard his spirit was heavy. The musical sounds of the steel upon the stone and the regular grinding of the saws upon the marble filled the air. Harrick was fond of these sounds, for they were to him like the sounds of battle. Trifles will turn the balance of thought, and as he crossed the yard pensively his eye rested upon the sunlit water that sparkled with life and motion; a fresh breeze stirred his locks, and carried along with it the laughter of a little child that played on one of the barges. Harrick's heart leaped up high with the sudden joy of life. The cloud of depression had passed away; the glorious sun of manhood shone out of his eyes as he entered the wooden hut.

It was the holy of holies of the establishment, where even Mason seldom entered. Except for a few hours on Saturday the counting house was nothing to it, for it was here that the best work-

men, the artists of their class, did their work. There were other model-rooms in the yard, and a good deal was done in the house; but the new-comers were always told to respect this particular hut, as it contained two most important men—Ververt, the grisly factotum of the establishment, and Warren Harrick, the most rising young artist. Although of considerable dimensions, the space inside was much taken up with half-finished models, casts of statues, blocks of stone, begun and for the time given up, clay mouldings, terracotta reliefs; while the walls were hung round with drawings of various kinds. The roof of the hut was covered by a skylight, shaded by curtains which could be adjusted by cords at the sides. Behind one of the blocks of stone, enveloped in a cloud of smoke, peered forth the grey-haired visage of Ververt. His deep-sunk and brilliant eyes watched the young man silently as he entered and smilingly changed his coat for a linen one.

“*Tiens*,” he said at last, impatiently, “you are, as usual, what you call in a dump to-day. You enter, you say not a word.”

“No more did you,” said Harrick, laughing, and going up to him to shake hands. “You were thinking about the ‘constitution,’ come?”

“And what if I was? There is *absolument* nothing to laugh at. Will you always ridicule the sublime?”

"You are an old humbug, Ververt. With all your notions about *la Constitution* and *la Republique universelle* you're a tyrant."

"*Comment*—a tyrant? What do you mean with that? You will call me a thief."

"No, only a tyrant; and a most oppressive one to the men under you."

"To those under me!" cried Ververt, in the midst of another cloud. "*Nom de nom*. You mean the rascals in the yard."

"Yes, the rascals in the yard. *Le peuple, mon ami*—the being with divine voice. You should make them comfortable."

"Bah, com-for-table! What, then, is this com-for-table? I don't know it."

"That's exactly where your Republics all fail. They are all uncomfortable. Why is this row with the men?"

"Don't ask me," said the Frenchman, moodily. "They always have row. Nobody knows what they want."

"I do," said Harrick. "They want comfort, cleanliness, and economy. And we shall have it."

"*Bien*—have it; nobody prevent you. But do not mix it up with business."

"Our business is our life," said Harrick; "and we mix everything up with it as you do your Republic. Now we are going to have a grand

change in this place. We are going to do away with Biddy to begin with."

"How is that? You cannot put her outside, and Mason won't send her away."

"It's you that won't send her away, tyrant. Mason is nobody. But no matter. She goes."

"She does not go. Mason nobody! *Nom de nom*, he is the giant in your path, I tell you. He has made up his mind to keep this woman here, *et la voilà*."

"Look here, Ververt, we have a friend stronger than Mason, who will compel Biddy to clean this place from garret to ceiling, and then leave the place to some clean, decent woman who'll do our work at our price."

"But, *mon ami*, Mason won't let her go. He will raise her wages."

"Very well. My friend will laugh at that, and make her go nevertheless."

"Bah—your friend. He is what you call a mystery."

"Yes, sir; and if the worst comes to the worst, that mysterious friend will tie Mason's hands and compel him to do our will."

"What is his name?"

"He is the friend that you have so long neglected and abused—whom you have never rightly understood—who is the most willing of slaves, the

most obedient of servants, the most powerful of allies, if you treat him properly."

"*Cent mille noms de nom !*" cried Ververt, with his hands to his ears. "His name? What is his name?"

"His name, Citoyen Baptiste Ververt, is—Combination."

"*Farçeur !*" cried the Republican, enveloping himself in a dense cloud, and continuing his work. "You have wasted half-an-hour over your mysterious friend already, and he turns out to be *absolument rien*."

"He presents you with his compliments, and hopes to pay your dirty bedroom upstairs a visit before the week is out."

"*Bien*. Let him make it dirtier if he can. But you are very gay this morning. What have you been doing?"

"I have been preaching a good sermon to the men; and I feel, like young Samson, that I could slay my ten thousand."

"*Certes*, you have what you call the beam in your eye. *Ecoutez mon fils*. You are not like young Samson one little bit, but you are like a young colt that wants what you call smashing in a bit. *Hein ?* You are too what you call frisking."

"I am strong, Ververt, and young, and I feel the blood coursing and throbbing in me. I feel

as if there is nothing in the whole wide world that I could not be or get if I wanted it—and I shall some day.”

“*Tiens vous voila.* Always the same—always sanguine and talking big, while you have never yet done one little thing that is worth what you call a noseful of snuff.”

“You old humbug!” cried Harrick, laughing, and with the playfulness of a boy seizing him by the arms and lifting him from the ground; “you said only the other day that my work was of great promise.”

“Yes, of great promise,” said Ververt, rubbing his arms; “but what is that? Mine was of great promise, and see me now. You want teachers sadly.”

“I know I do; and as soon as I am released from this villainous contract, I am going to Rome.”

“*Bien*; but you won’t find them there. One of them is mysterious; he is the hardest and yet the gentlest of all.”

“Do I know him?” asked Harrick, with a quick glance.

“You don’t know him, and you will never rise until you do. It was he of whom the great Alighieri said, ‘Great minds must know the depths of sorrow, if they would feel the depths of art.’ And this teacher, whom you know

nothing whatever of, who teaches purity of conception, and"—

"What is his name?" said Harrick, who had seated himself before a block of stone, on which there was a half-finished relief, a copy of Canova's Hope—"What's his name?"

"His name," replied Ververt, slowly, "is Sorrow."

"That's one," said Harrick; "who is the other?"

"The other—is Love."

"What!" exclaimed Harrick, with a laugh; "are you turning renegade?"

Ververt was silent. His eyes were fixed upon the door, which had opened at that moment and admitted the head of the establishment.


CHAPTER XVI.

MR. MASON.

MR. MASON was a little, dried-up individual, of an age somewhere between forty and eighty, whose distinctive quality was hardness. He looked from top to toe as if he had been cut out of his own stone. There was not an ounce of fat on his body; his hands were dry and bony, and when he spoke there was in his voice that unpleasantly harsh and unmusical sound which is generally found with the deaf alone. Evil report had it that Mason's voice originally was of a much softer quality, but that in his continual endeavour to put things in as hard a light as he could, all the mellowness had gradually dropped, as if conscious that it had no business there. Mr. Mason found himself in this world as the sole representative of eight generations, and as many branches of the parent stem, which, in the course of years, had slowly petrified or withered. The Masonic blood, originally thin, had become thinner

and meaner; but the present representative of old Hallelujah had such veneration for his ancestors that he still considered them members of the firm, and always spoke of *we*.

Doubtless the business of Mason and Co. had been carried on in accordance with the most approved principles. If these principles were a trifle hard, they never departed one hair's-breadth from the strict interpretation of the law; and the reputation of the firm stood high. Yet there were ugly rumours that things had not gone well since Hallelujah had been changed to Halle. There were occasional whispers of vast speculations and serious losses, and once Ververt had dropped something about an unknown but powerful creditor, who held the firm in his grasp, and could break it at any moment. Whatever might be the truth of this, it seemed to make no difference to Mr. Mason. If he had speculated, he had done so with his eyes open, knowing what might be the consequences; and it was not in his nature to expect anything except the most rigorous justice. And what if it came to the worst? Mr. Mason had in his life had extensive dealings with widows and orphans, and he had come to see that the greatest afflictions in this world might be made to wear a serene, not to say a cheerful aspect. Therefore Mr. Mason was comforted and "*firm*," as he called it. As he put his head inside the hut,



his cold eye looked into it, looked all over it, and then, with a firm step, he entered and shut the door. Neither Ververt nor Harrick showed by sign or word that they were aware of his presence. There was nothing approaching to ceremony between them, and Harrick, who sat with his back to the door, did not trouble to turn his head.

"We have looked over your report of Genthorpe, Harrick," said Mr. Mason, "and we have marked in the catalogue what we think worth buying, and the maximum price. You had better go down to the sale, and buy. The things to be taken to our yard in Thamestone and properly cleaned."

"Very well," answered Harrick, curtly, and without looking round.

"We must request you at the same time not to repeat your absurd conduct down there."

"What do you mean?" said the young artisan, slowly turning round and smiling.

"We have been told that you have indulged in very extravagant and foolish language in Thamestone."

"I have done no more in Thamestone than I do in London," answered the young man.

"Which means that you go meddling with all sorts of things that don't concern you."

"I did not say that."

"But we say it."

"Well, whatever things they are, they don't concern you."

"Don't concern us!" repeated Mr. Mason, in a measured tone. "It does. It makes the name of our firm unpopular."

"What!" cried Harrick, laughing. "I make your name unpopular? The name of Mason?"

"We are not given to many words, Harrick," said the firm, without the slightest sign of annoyance; "but if you go to represent us you must take care of our reputation."

"In Heaven's name in what way?" said Harrick, somewhat impatiently.

"We have been told that you have been spouting at a working-men's meeting, and stirring up discontent."

"Well, supposing I have; what then?"

"We must request you to wait with that until you are your own master."

"Let me be my own master, then."

"No, we won't. And while you are in our employ, and go as our representative, you must forbear stirring up discontent, and giving umbrage to the aristocracy."

"Look here, Mason," said Harrick, rising, and towering over the little man, "you are my employer. In an evil hour, when I was young and foolish, I signed a contract with you for ten years. I have frequently told you that you had all the advantage, and, in fairness, should make a new agreement. You appeal to the letter, so do I.

Don't attempt to dictate to me in private. As employer, I obey you; but as man, I despise you, and you know it."

"Yes, yes, we are accustomed to that kind of thing," said Mason, with imperturbable dryness. "You have always been a man of many words. Your contract is a very fair one, for your work is frequently inferior."

"That's a lie," said Harrick. "Whatever I am, my work is as good as I can make it."

"We don't deny that," replied Mason, "but it is not as good as it might be."

"How can it? If you had sent me to Rome, or given me more chance to study, it would have been otherwise. But what can I learn in this hole, working at disgusting monuments."

"You are always talking about Rome, as if Rome were a mine of wealth and knowledge to you. You have been there long enough; you have visited other places where you could study, and you may be thankful that we employed you at home, and that you are earning fair bread and cheese."

"I am not thankful. Release me to-day, and to-morrow I'll leave your bread and cheese for Rome."

"And you would be like some of those poor devils that come here without breeches."

"Never mind," said Harrick, the natural gaiety of his disposition shining through his anger, "I

shan't be the first man who wears a kilt. As for my work—your book is a better judge than you are. What did you sell my last piece for?"

"Never mind that," said Mason drily. "We give you fair warning to stop that revolutionary game of yours, or we shall have to send you to some out-of-the-way place, far away from the centres of rebellion."

"I defy you," said Harrick, with a proud smile; "you are too wide-awake a man to employ me on any but the very best work, and that, you know, lies round about London."

"Indeed? You had better take heed, for if you get too bold and communistic, we may have to send you out of the way."

"Bah! Mason; do you think I am an idiot? You'll send me nowhere except at your good profit."

"We hope to combine the two—and we think that a quiet country retreat might improve you. Because you can do good work, you know! we always said so. Now this," said he, stepping up to the relief at which the young sculptor was working, "this, you know, is not bad. If everything were as good—it would be better for you."

"And for you, no doubt," muttered Harrick. "I'm in your power, Mason, and you know it. But wait until this iniquitous law is repealed—wait until you no longer have the power to cast me into jail, and I shall burst the bond that ties me to this

infernal hole, at any and every cost. It will not be long, thank Heaven—that is one comfort.”

“Very well. Comfort yourself with that, if you like, and hold your tongue. The law is in force yet, remember.”

Mason said these last words with a smile that made his face look like a stone with an ugly flaw in it. He looked at Ververt, and Ververt, silent throughout the conversation, looked at him, and the door shut.

“*Nom de nom*,” cried Ververt, rising, the moment they were alone, “how could you endure this man as you have done?”

“Why not?” asked Harrick, simply. The smile had already returned to his face.

“And you smile! I would have taken the little man and throttle him,” said Ververt, stretching forth ten lean fingers.

“So would I if I had been a man of revolution. I am not. I hold nothing more sacred in this world than the law. Bad as it is, it is all we have to guide us. As long as it is there, I obey it.”

“You obey it, and spoil your life, and waste your youth. You who should be in love with beauty, and grace and loveliness; you waste your years on a parched and dried up old woman like the law. *O ciel*.”

“My youth is not wasted; don’t I tell you that I feel strong and joyous, and vigorous as a young

lion. As long as the sun shines, and the birds sing, and the air has this delicious fragrance, I am happy."

"And your future? Are you to remain a workman for all your life? You are what you call an eccentric cove. You always talk big. You say you can be anything; and when you find you are fettered by this miserable man, you do not feel sad, you smile. You love the law; and you spend your time in making the speech to men that do not concern you. What do you want with all these men, and their unions? You are an artist."

"But I was a man before I was an artist, and mankind has the first claim on me. You don't understand me, Ververt. I feel myself, as it were, a representative of young labouring England. You, who have known me in Belleville, in Rouen, and in Rome, you—who have been to me like a father, and seen me grow up—you see me develope now in a way you do not understand. That is young England, Ververt. We feel that we working-men have come into a great national heritage of strength, and that it is our duty as men, and co-heirs of that heritage, to devote half our lives and all our spare talents to the great good of all. We live for something beside our immediate selves. We are determined to share our burdens, and make the load light. This contract weighs heavily upon me; but if I lived for art alone, and took no heed

of the men around me, thought of nothing but art, and of no happiness except in art, I should go mad. Art, after all, is only one of the means of happiness, judicious combination is another, and the new wisdom and strength that has come upon us may impart to my future work a power of which Michel Angelo knew nothing."

Ververt, the ancient, the cynical, looked at the powerful frame before him, breathing with life and vigour.

"*Nom de nom*," he said, with a shake of the head, and touching a block of stone, of exquisite whiteness, that was growing into shape, "how can you prefer a dirty workman to this?"

"And what is that," said Harrick, "but the form of an idea? We have an idea as old, as beautiful, as pure; and we shall express it, and hew it out in the rock of a nation, so that it will outlast even this."

CHAPTER XVII.

HARRICK AT WORK.

IN the afternoon of that day, when the sun was beginning to throw long shadows, and the great mass of busy Londoners began pouring through crowded streets to crowded railway stations, and rushed into the country by every means of conveyance, there sounded through the midst of them a cry, familiar to the ears of all, that scarcely attracted more attention than that of the fruit vendor who endeavours to sell his stale wares. Yet it was a cry of most dreadful import, telling how the hand of death had suddenly snatched up the cords of a hundred lives, breaking some twenty, and so fearfully straining the remainder that they lay useless and well-nigh torn. It was the cry of a great railway accident at Thamestone Junction, within thirty miles of London, and people read it, and heard, and shook their heads, and passed on, forgetting all about it, as belonging to an unpleasant business which they were entitled to leave behind them on this Saturday half-holiday.

Most of the men in Mason's yard had taken advantage of the half-holiday to renew their acquaintance with the sun; but neither Harrick nor Ververt were thus inclined. Both had remained in the hut, working quietly, with the occasional interchange of a few words, and knowing nothing of what was going on in the outside world, when a gurgling noise and a sudden activity outside caused Ververt to look up with some surprise.

"I did not know that it was as late as this," said he.

"As late as what?" asked Harrick.

"The tide has turned, and is running into the creek. Can you not hear what you call your bargee at work?"

"Yes, the sound is very familiar to my ears; but I really did not know what it was."

"It's the barges that have come down the river; they drop in here for coke as soon as the tide turns."

There was a tap at the door. The face of a bargeman popped in and put the question—"I beg pardon—but is there a gemman here by the name of Harrick?"

Harrick looked up and answered.

"Oh! it's you, is it, master?" said the bargee. "I've got a mate of yourn on board. But he's sly, he is."

"Who, what, and where are you from, my friend?" said Harrick, rising.

"I've dropped into this 'ere creek for coke. And your mate he called me somewhere above Thamestone, this morning, werry early, and begged me to take him to this 'ere place. But he's a rum 'un, he is, and sly."

"Who can it be?" said Harrick, somewhat perplexed. "Do you know his name?"

"I don't know his name, nor don't I know him," said the bargee, still with his head in and his body out; "but he is badly hurt, I think, and he's gotten some sort of railway uniform on, and he's been muttering about some accident, and he seems afraid-like to show hisself;" and he said that Harrick would make it all right for him. That's what he is."

"Railway-man! Thamestone! Is this a big man with a peculiar look in his eye?"

"Well, he do have a werry peculiar look *out* of his eye, so to say," answered bargee. "He squints uncommon, he do."

"Why, it's Petrello! What, in Heaven's name, is he doing here in this fashion? I'll come with you."

"That's right, sir. He said as he wouldn't come out unless he saw you fust—'cause, he says, they're after him. My barge is just lying close by, and you can put him in here easy."

Harrick and Ververt rose and went out. In a few minutes they returned with Petrel, who

stumbled into the hut and on to a seat, with but little power to control his huge body. He looked hastily around, as if to ascertain that they were alone; and while fixing one burning eye upon each of the men, he screwed his face into an elaborate and painful smile, and groaned heavily. His glittering eye, parched lips, the hectic flush on his cheek, the drops of sweat on his brow, and the stoop of his heavy body, which he still struggled to conceal, were unmistakable signs that the hand of sickness was upon him.

"What is the matter with you, Petrel? Speak up. You know Ververt."

"It's comed at last, Harrick," groaned the man. "I said it would, and it has comed; but I ain't going to be took."

"*Nom de nom*," said Ververt; "this man is what you call shock bad. He is raving."

"I ain't raving. But, I say, there ain't no police about here, is there? 'cause I'm wanted, and I ain't going to be took."

"But what have you been doing? Tell us all about it."

"I've been took twice for nothing, and I ain't going to be took a third time. I've got a couple of bullets somewhere fust."

"*Tiens*," said Ververt, with much wisdom, "here is some cognac. Drink that down, and don't what you call worrit yourself."

Petrel seized the flask eagerly with his giant hand, and gulped down the liquid with feverish haste. He sat for a moment motionless, his eyes fixed upon the men, and an occasional shiver running over his body. Presently he brought his hand to his forehead and wiped off the perspiration.

"I sometimes think I shall lose my thoughts, Harrick, but they ain't gone yet. They have tried hard, but they ain't gone yet."

"Have you been in an accident? You look as if you've been hurt somewhere."

"So I have, Harrick. It's my ribs that's broke. I was on the signal-box close to where you see me, and I had been at work for thirty-six hours; and I fell asleep, and woke up with a start, and turned on the wrong lever. The next moment there was an almighty smash right underneath me, and it knocked part of my box down, and me with it; and when I picked myself up again, though I found there was something broke inside, I crept away and down to the river-side; and I lay in the grass until I see this here barge come along, and he took me along to you. That's what's the matter with me."

"Petrello," said Harrick, putting his hand lightly upon the giant's shoulder—though even at that light touch the body shrank in pain—"Petrello, before God, had you been drinking?"

"Drinking, Warren?—I had not touched a drop of liquor that day. Bligh me if I had."

"There would have been no mercy, no excuse for you, if you had."

"Mercy!" cried Petrel, violently starting. "Who's got mercy on folks like us? They ain't even got justice for such as we. They won't even bury our poor babbies; but we'll have a fling at them, Warren, my boy. I'm very tired and stiff, somehow, from lying in the wet grass. Can't you put me up quiet somewhere for a day or two?"

"This man had better go to the hospital, *n'est ce pas?*" said Ververt. "I think he must be very ill."

"I ain't going to no hospital," growled Petrel. "I'll be took if I get there, and I ain't going to be took. Who are you?"

"You know I am a friend," said Ververt. "I have had something of the same kind, and I have much sympathy with you."

"I don't want no sympathy," muttered the man, whose brain was beginning to feel the effects of alcohol. "I want my liberty, that's all; and I shall leave this country as soon as I can, if they ain't going to alter nothing in it. I told them as how it was going to happen—that I was workin' for me and my mate, and couldn't keep it on, and they had better send down a man to help

me; and they said if my mate was ill, and couldn't do his work, they must dock his wages. And rather than do that, seeing as he had a wife and four children, and nothing to fall back on but ten shillings of club allowance, I worked on alone; and it comed as I said. And if we don't have an everlastin' fling at some of them afore my time is up—I'd rather go back to Paris."

"What would you do in Paris?" asked Ververt, sombrely.

"I don't know—have a fling at some of the high uns," muttered Petrel, drowsily. "It can't be long now."

The wretched man closed his eyes, and a livid colour overspread his features.

"He has fainted," said Ververt. "He must be in great pain, and the sooner he is put to bed the better. Wet his lips and his temples with brandy. We'll put him in my room upstairs."

"No, no," said Harrick, "I think it is better for him to be taken to my room. I have some sort of liking for this man, and he will be well nursed there. Lizzie likes that kind of thing."

In a few moments—thanks to their attention—the sufferer opened his eyes, although he breathed heavily, and groaned with pain. He was evidently too ill and too weak to speak.

"Hold him for a moment," said Harrick. "I believe one or two of the men are still outside,

and will give us a lift with him. We must get him into a cab. Bear up, Petrel; you'll be all right presently."

Harrick went out, and returned not long afterwards with a young workman who had volunteered his services. There was a cab waiting at the yard gate, and it was found that with some assistance Petrel could walk to the vehicle. Harrick detained it for a moment while he wrote something on a slip of paper and gave it to the sick man's friend.

"Give this to Miss Phidias—the young lady—will you, Turner? and see that he is carried or goes into my bed. I would have come myself, but that I have an engagement."

He returned to the hut, followed by Ververt, and began gathering up his tools and covering his work. In the midst of it he paused, and paced up and down with rapid strides.

"I tell you, Ververt," said he, "it is when I see a thing of this sort that I begin to boil with indignation."

"Bah; I have boiled for forty year at much worse thing than that."

"What can be worse than this? What redress has this man, what power of resistance, what protection?"

"None. He is at the mercy of society; therefore he is right in trying to overthrow society."

"Nay, by Heaven," said Harrick, "we know better. We'll teach his masters a lesson. We shall give him the best physician; and if it comes to law—which it must—we'll give him the best counsel at the bar, and we'll indict the chairman of the company."

"*Tiens!* this is what you call a bluster," said Ververt, with an incredulous smile; "with three pounds a week you are going to give guineas to a grand physician."

"Yes, and guineas to a grand lawyer."

"No doubt you are very wealthy," said Ververt, with a sneer.

"No; but I have the command of a rich friend's purse."

"I am glad to hear it," sneered the Frenchman. "He has not been very good or liberal to you."

"And yet he has done much for me, Ververt. It is the same friend I mentioned before. His name is Combination."

"And you are going to the Central Committee of the Brotherhood now? Take care what you do, young man."

"What do you mean?"

"I know your mission. It has been mine in days gone by. I have helped to organise revolutions. Many have failed: a few succeeded, but not for us—not for the people."

"That lesson was taught me by my father, Ver-

vert. My mission is not revolution. It is one of peace."

He left, and took his course through streets and lanes, crowded with labourers taking their rest and scowling at their wives and families, and turned into the private side entrance of the "Crown and Sceptre" public-house, which in the gathering dusk was already beginning to blaze with light. It was here that the Great Brotherhood of Labour had its head-quarters, and the Central Committee, of which Harrick was a member, was about to meet. It was rather early, and some of the members had not yet arrived. Those who were present, however, welcomed him with cordiality. His speech at Thamestone had been read by all, and although there was plenty of praise, there were some who considered it their duty to take him to task for his unsparing severity towards the men. Harrick was strangely silent, and answered in monosyllables.

The great absorbing topic of the hour was the proposed demonstration. Although there were many men, and their number was constantly augmented by new comers, although every branch of industry and trade was represented, there seemed on this subject but one mind. Punctually at the hour, the president entered and took the chair. John Kennedy was a man who looked his part. With a powerful frame, he had one of those strongly marked heads, deep eyes, firm, hard mouth, and

broad, deliberate, and emphatic northern accents, that indicate a fitness to be a great popular leader. He fulfilled his duties with rare good sense. A man of few, but well chosen words, of thoughtful action, and iron firmness, he ruled the discussion with a justness and a tact that brought upon him not one murmur.

The business of the meeting was taken up with the hearing of reports, especially from provincial centres; and as there was necessarily some repetition, the proceedings would have become tedious but for the absorbing interest of the topic. It was very evident that money was flowing in on all sides, and that it was flowing easily.

"There can be little doubt," said Kennedy, "that the Lords, if not the Commons, have made up their minds to throw out this Bill, and it would be ill-judged on our part to wait with hostilities until it is too late. The second reading comes on in the Commons next Monday fortnight, that is June 23rd. That's very late in the season, gentlemen, and we all know that the prime minister will burk us if he can. Now, if we can get ready, we should hold our demonstration on Saturday, June 21st; that will give them plenty of time to think it over by Monday night. As for an eventual strike, it is not a matter to be hastily resolved upon; but I submit it to you, that if the thing is to be done, if the blow is to be struck, it should be struck at

the very heart of business and comfort at once, without the power of resistance. I propose that we select those who are fewest in numbers, and whose defection will have the most immediate and irresistible consequences. Gentlemen, weigh my words—I propose all railway servants, engineers, guards, and pointsmen; all cabmen, 'bus-drivers, and carriers; all postmen throughout London, Manchester, and Liverpool. Their numbers are comparatively small, and as we don't do much railway travelling, or cabbings, and don't get many letters, it can do *us* very little harm. If you will consider this proposal, especially the date of the demonstration, this day fortnight, I propose to adjourn this meeting till Monday night."

The adjournment was carried in silence, the meeting rose, and dispersed almost without a word. The coolness and audacity of the proposal had stunned many. They were all bound to secrecy, and they went home to think over a scheme of such serious import. Harrick alone remained behind. He had been silent all through, and now, when he was alone with Kennedy, he regarded him with steady and somewhat sombre look.

"You don't seem to like it, laddie," said Kennedy, with his broad hand on Harrick's shoulder. He was fond of the young man.

"Like it!" said Harrick. "I have told you over and over again that I think a strike for

political purposes unjustifiable. I shall never consent to it while I have a voice. I shall oppose it on Monday."

"You won't have a voice long if ye try to wrestle with me, lad," said Kennedy, darkly.

"We shall see. But I have another case at present, which I think the Central Committee ought to take up." He rapidly related the circumstances of Petrel's accident and its consequences.

"You must apply to the Brotherhood of Railway Men. The Central Committee can do nothing with this."

"Why not? Make it a national case, as it deserves to be. Let him be attended by Brussell and defended by the Solicitor-General."

"We can't afford that, laddie."

"We can if we take it out of the strike fund."

"We must use that for the strike."

"Perhaps not. I have a proposal for you which I hope you'll accept," said Harrick, mentioning his interview with Lord Ryan at the Cottage.

"I want none of your lords. Take my advice and steer clear of them."

"Nay, if we can thereby avert this calamitous demonstration and strike."

"We don't want to do that either."

"That's what I thought!" exclaimed Harrick, jumping up. "You are ambitious, Kennedy. You

are no longer a leader to be trusted. Tell me, do you fight for the good of all, or for victory?"

"For the good of all," said the president, somewhat taken aback by the other's energy.

"Then if there be a chance of compromise and peace, you are bound to come. It can do no possible harm, and your sledge-hammer arguments may break their opposition."

"There's no much chance o' that," answered Kennedy, who was secretly flattered.

"Try it," said Harrick, with a smile.

"Very weel; I will, laddie. But mind me, keep clear o' lords. They're almost as bad as ladies."

The two men shook hands and parted.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CHERRY GARDENS.

AMONG the many speculations in which the firm of Mason and Co. had indulged, there was one which indicated that a former member of that firm must have possessed considerable worldly wisdom. It also indicated that the present representative was not that man. It was a standing monument to the wisdom of the father and the folly of the son; it might be considered a landmark to show the last period in their history, when the blood of the Masons was still thick enough to be in fair working order. The grandfather of the present Hallelujah had invested some of his capital in the erection of sundry streets and squares in the centre of the then rising district of Lambeth; and had brought to bear upon his work the principles and maxims which had so often brought success. It was the quintessence of their tradition and experience that mankind was rendered happy by a smart exterior, and a neat arrangement of

words; and if high-sounding names and smart exteriors could have brought prosperity to a neighbourhood, that portion of Lambeth, where Mr. Mason had speculated in brick and mortar, ought to have been one of the most prosperous of the borough.

In their practice of melodiously ticketing the dead for the benefit of posterity, the Masons had come to look upon the Queen's English as their private property, with which they could do what they liked; and in this case they had taken the liberty of calling the centre of their system of brickwork, Mount Pleasant. At no time could the tiny square that bore this name have been a mount, for it lay in a hollow; and it would have been very difficult to make it pleasant, for when it was seized upon by Mason it had gone through the successive stages of dust-heap, brick-field, and mud-pond. Round about it there radiated such mellifluous names as Honeysuckle Lane, Rose Terrace, Cherry Gardens, and so forth: and when the rural vocabulary became exhausted, Mason, going boldly on the other tack, had adopted a few names from the other side of the water, beginning with Trafalgar Square. The open space so christened was just large enough to contain half-a-dozen shrubs and a pump, and around it came in bewildering succession, St. James's Street, Pall Mall, Burlington

Gardens, and a host of others, which are usually connected in the mind of a Londoner with palatial barracks, gloomy club-houses, and impassable macadam.

It had not been the intention of the originator of this district to hand it down to posterity. He was too wise a man in his generation; and that after the lapse of that generation the majority of the houses were still in an upright condition, and tenanted, was more owing to the natural force of cohesion than to the design of the builder. As he had expected, the houses had at first been let at something like double their proper rent; but now, notwithstanding the sweetness and grandeur of its nomenclature, the neighbourhood could not be said to be an improving one.

The present Hallelujah was too hard a landlord; and although he had kept the names, he had neglected the smart exterior. He had neglected a good many things that should have been attended to, but neglect seemed infectious in the neighbourhood. The rent suffered severely from that malady, and the tax collectors were in a chronic state of bullying. In fact, the neighbourhood was going down. The number of public-houses was steadily increasing, and several pawn-brokers had set up establishments with much success. Many of the houses which had stolidly refused to decay were inhabited by a class of

people who had stolidly refused to flourish. Half the female population could boast that it had seen better days; the men generally did not boast about their days.

It was one of the dingy houses in Cherry Gardens that was inhabited by George Phidias, Esquire, formerly of Manchester, who was commonly known by his friends as J. F. The style of the house was genteel, not to say ambitious. A flight of steps, very much cracked, led to a portico with pillars very much patched, and peeling. It was part of the usual terrace of Roman and Grecian ruins, with a thin coating of London soot. There was a small patch of front garden, with a few grass sods, and a well-trodden inclination to the lower door. The window of the parlour was open, and if any one of the inhabitants of hot and dusty London had taken it into his head to refresh himself by a walk in Cherry Gardens, he would, no doubt, have glanced with some pleasure at the only cherries to be seen therein, from end to end—the pouting lips of a girl sitting lazily at the window.

She was not only lazy, for she did nothing, but she was languid. She lay back in her chair with a listless mien, a piece of linen resting in her lap, and other pieces lying about on the table, on the floor, and on a small sewing machine in front. Her eyes turned from the work with evident dislike, but a light came into them as they

rested on the meagre, parched, and dusty patches of grass outside.

The room was as poorly furnished as it well could be. The floor was covered by that last refuge of gentility, a cheap felt. The cheap felt was modest—the door, in an imperious sort of manner, had a habit of brushing it aside whenever it opened, and the felt had not only modestly changed colour at that spot, but it had shrunk considerably, and was retiring under the table. It was interesting to watch the progress which the door had been making in the quarrel, and the girl was just calculating how long—if such were possible—it would take him to work all round the room, when he again became imperious, and admitted a little woman, the wife of George Phidias, Esquire. She was a busy, bright-eyed little body, with a cheerful voice, pleasant mien, and hearty laugh that was heard a good many times in the day, and a few lines around the lips, when they were at rest; lines that were deep, and hard, and furrowed, and that spoke of oh! such sorrow and tears. But they were not often seen, for the lips were too busy.

“Come, Lizzie, woman,” said she, straightening the felt, “you know an empty hand is worse than an empty head.”

“Mother, I can’t work any more at this,” said Lizzie, drearily sighing. “I am sick of it.”

“Sick of work, woman,” said the mother, with

a quick turn of her head; "tired already! Why, there's heaps more!"

"Oh, I dare say there's heaps and heaps more when that is done, and heaps after that," said Lizzie.

"Why, what's the matter with the child, all at once?" said Mrs. Phidias, with a touch of anxiety in her voice.

"Mother," said Lizzie with energy, "I hate this work. I hate sticking in-doors. Why may I not go out?"

"We'll go for a walk in the park presently, child," said the mother, bustling about the room.

"Oh, no, I don't mean that," said the girl, querulously. "Why should I stick to this machine, and abominable room?"

"Lizzie!" cried the mother, pausing angrily in front of her, and almost striking the delicate cheek, "how dare you talk like this? This is the old question, and the old spirit of rebellion. You shall be obedient, child; you must!"

"Yes, mamma," answered the girl, by no means subdued; "but why, and to whom? Why may I not go out?"

"Because your father won't have it, and that is quite enough."

"Papa thinks that it is below my station to go into a shop or into a post office; it is not genteel enough."

"And if your father, after due consideration, thinks so, it is your duty to obey," said Mrs. Phidias, going to the door.

"Papa has such absurd notions of gentility," said Lizzie, still rebellious. "It is a pity——"

"What is a pity?" asked the mother, halting, with the door in her hand.

"It is a pity," said Lizzie, flushing, "that his gentility has not been able to keep him—better."

She was going to say "sober," but hesitated as she saw her mother's face. There was upon it, at that moment, a pallor, and an intense look of pain, that made it no longer the same. She still looked severely at her daughter, but as she turned round to leave the room, a sigh escaped her silent lips, the lines of sorrow became deep, and involuntarily she cast her eyes towards heaven. It was irresistible. The silent look of the mother smote the child to the heart. She burst into tears, and, throwing away her work, hastened across the room, and wept upon her mother's neck. Between the sobs that came as from an overcharged heart, she showered the most endearing names, and begged to be forgiven; while the patient mother, always ready to love and to forgive, struggled hard to repress her tears, and gently stroked the hair that rested on her own agitated bosom.

"There is a heavy responsibility on you, my darling," said she presently; "it may be hard

for you to obey, but you should pray for strength. 'Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right,' says Paul, and you must endeavour to do God's will, and subdue that rebellious spirit. Come, child, go and put a ticket in Mr. Barringer's window."

"Do you think it is any use, mamma?" said Lizzie, who had again returned to listlessness and langour.

"It is possible that some stranger may pass by and see it," said Mrs. Phidias, with no great confidence.

"I hate strangers," said Lizzie, taking down the cupboard-key from a nail, and biting the corner of it. "Why should papa ever have taken such a very big house. It's much too large for him."

"You know very well, my dear, that he thought it would do him good in business."

"But he must know very well now that it has done nothing of the kind, mamma," said Lizzie, diving into a cupboard near the fireplace, and producing a card for single gentlemen.

Mrs. Phidias had given no answer, and left the room; and Lizzie, slowly fastening a smart riband to the card, went listlessly upstairs to hang it in the front window, when the sound of approaching wheels attracted her attention. The wheels stopped at the door; the bell gave a sharp ring,

and some one came rapidly up the steps. Lizzie was at the door in an instant, and opening it saw before her one of the men at Mason's yard, who had sometimes called on Harrick. As she saw the cab her cheeks paled.

"Who is in that cab? There is—nothing—nothing—wrong with Mr. Harrick?" faltered she.

"No miss," said the man with a smile; "it's only one of his friends that's very ill. He's sent a note with him, miss."

Lizzie hastily tore it open, and muttered, "poor fellow," adding while she ran upstairs to make the necessary preparation, "You had better bring him in at once, and take him up to the second floor front, if he can manage to walk."

With the assistance of the cabby, the sick man, who seemed exhausted, and who took the help gratefully, had walked up the steps. He tried to squint cheerfully as he stumbled upstairs, but it was hard work. Once or twice he grasped the rickety banister as though he would have pulled it down without much trouble, but he managed to accomplish the journey without permanently injuring the Masonic property. The journey, however, was quite enough. When he reached the room he sank on a chair, and his head fell upon his chest. His breathing became heavy and laboured, and his pulse throbbed audibly.

"Why, goodness me," cried Mrs. Phidias, who

had been upstairs; "the man is in a faint. Run, woman, for the vinegar, and then go downstairs and make a strong cup of tea, while we put him to bed."

Lizzie was out of the room and down the stairs with much alacrity. All her listlessness had vanished. It is a question whether she did not take three steps at a time, for the vinegar was certainly brought up with the least possible delay, and she was down again, blowing the fire and making the tea, and up again with a steaming cup, when the united exertions of the mother and Turner had scarcely enabled them to bring the huge man to his senses, and put him to bed. Lizzie would allow no one else to give him the draught, and as he drank it eagerly and sank back refreshed, there was tenderness in the way in which she stroked the matted locks from the burning brow.

Then with silent steps she went about the room, opening windows, pulling down blinds, and making it as nice and comfortable as only a woman can. There was no more querulousness in her face; the grave manner in which she kept her eyes on the patient, while gliding about, indicated tenderness and care. The smaller back room, which was also occupied by Harrick, and from which a door opened into the front room, was used by him as a sort of studio. It

was filled with drawings, mouldings, and casts; and but for a little hand that stealthily dusted it every day, would have been in a fine mess. Lizzie now opened both doors and the window, and began noiselessly clearing up the contents into a corner, and preparing what is popularly known as a shake-down. She was interrupted by her mother.

"What are you doing, Lizzie, woman? You had better leave that until he comes, and go down to your work."

"Oh, no, mamma," pleaded she earnestly. "I must remain to watch him. Do let me. He is my patient."

"He is your patient?" repeated Mrs. Phidias; "what do you mean, Lizzie?"

"I mean that Harrick asked me to look after him, and I sha'n't leave him now."

Mrs. Phidias gave a quick glance at her daughter's face, and then at the little hand that still clutched a narrow strip of paper. She put out her own and took it. The girl flushed and relinquished it reluctantly. It was very simple and in pencil: "Dear Lizzie, look after this poor fellow, and be kind to him. Put him into my bed. He is badly hurt, and I shall send a doctor."

Mrs. Phidias said nothing, but returned the paper, and went down pensively. As she reached

the hall, the front door was opened with a latch-key, and admitted a young man, whose swarthy face was so marked with small-pox as almost to disfigure him. That, but for this, he might have been handsome, was shown by the smile of singular sweetness which gave to his otherwise sombre face a winning, and sometimes a weird, expression. There was something very striking in the change between the stern look with which he entered, and the smile with which he addressed Mrs. Phidias, on noticing the linen bandages on her arm.

"What, another of Harrick's patients, Mrs. F.?" said he.

"Yes, Mr. Barringer, and such a queer looking man. But he is very ill, poor fellow."

"They generally are," said Barringer. "I wonder he doesn't set up a private hospital."

"I wouldn't be surprised if he did," said she laughing. "And he will have to sleep on the floor, among his casts, too."

"No, that he sha'n't," said Barringer. "I'll make him share my bed."

"But Lizzie is making it, Mr. Barringer."

"Then she must not. I won't hear of it." And without shutting the door, Barringer rushed upstairs to remonstrate with the little nurse. Mrs. Phidias shook her head, and went to the door to shut it, but found that it would not shut. This

was a common failing with the doors, and she knew it was generally overcome by a little patient pushing. But not on this occasion. The door seemed suddenly to have developed a tendency to push back and open more widely. Mrs. Phidias thought it odd, and pushed again, but the door, in a playful sort of way, opened still further. Then, looking cautiously round, she discovered that the door had developed a somewhat florid gentleman, with gold spectacles, and generally the aspect of a thriving farmer.

"Pardon me," said the florid stranger, "wherever I roam, whatever realms to see, I hope I do not intrude. You have apartments?"

"Yes, sir, we have," replied Mrs. Phidias, adding, after second thought, "that is, I don't know."

"You do know, and you don't know?" said the farmer, smiling with his lips, and looking with his eyes all over the passage.

"Yes, sir," said the little lady, somewhat confused by the contrast between smiling and prying, "we shall have some."

"Ah! the gentleman has not quite decided whether he'll go. Meanwhile, you'll allow me to see them, I hope?"

"Yes, sir," said Mrs. Phidias, following the gentleman into the room, "if you'll walk in, please."

"Ah! I see, artist!" said the florid man. "Quite neat. Sweet auburn; loveliest colour of the plain.

That's a pretty study of a head. Now, ma'am, I am a plain homely farmer, who is often in town upon business."

"Yes, sir," replied the lady of the house, wondering who the man was; "this is a plain and homely neighbourhood."

"Quite so, Mrs. Phillips."

"My name is not Phillips, sir."

"Oh, indeed! My name is Tagson; Farmer Tagson, generally. And your name is not Phillips?"

"No, sir."

"How odd. Thought I heard a gentleman, just now, call you so. May I ask what it might be?"

"It might be Phidias—Mrs. George Phidias," replied the lady, with a smile at the odd manner of the man.

"Phidias! A great name. Remote and splendid; celebrated Greek. May I ask whether you have any higher rooms?"

"We have, sir; but they are occupied, and there is little chance of their becoming vacant."

"Perhaps," said Mr. Tagson, having looked at every picture, and into every corner of the room, and now stepping into the hall, "perhaps we can come to some arrangement. I like height, and I don't object to pay well."

"Really, sir," hesitated Mrs. Phidias, "I don't know. I don't think you could. There's a person ill upstairs at present."

"Ah! I don't mind that," said he, going upstairs. "I shan't make any noise. I only want to look."

It seemed as if he only wanted to look everywhere—thought Mrs. Phidias, as she followed him upstairs—for his head was incessantly turning hither and thither. He opened the door, cautiously, and peered in; glanced at the man in the bed, at the men at the foot of it, at the girl in the door of the other room, and back again at the man in the bed, in an instant, and all with a smile of most studied simplicity.

"Excellent! charming!" said Mr. Tagson, advancing into the room. "How do you do, sir? Dear me, how odd! Have I not had the pleasure of meeting you somewhere?"

"No, sir," answered Barringer curtly, and looking fiercely at the man.

"Yes, surely," said Mr. Tagson, "or by the lazy Scheldt or wandering Po. It must have been in Italy. How odd! A most extraordinary likeness."

"I am not aware that we have ever met," repeated Barringer curtly.

"Yes," said Tagson. "I'm almost sure of it now. In Florence it was. Your name is—Bai—Blai—something."

"No, sir," said Barringer, savagely, yet growing pale; "it is not."

"I tell you I ain't going to be took," growled a

fierce voice from the bed. "I'll tear the liver out of him first."

"All right, keep quiet," said Barringer, going up to the sick man, who was sitting up in bed and glaring fiercely at the stranger.

"I ain't going to be took," said Petrel, attempting to get out. "I have been took twice for nothing. I ain't going to be took a third time."

"That's all right—here, drink some of this," said Barringer, endeavouring vainly to calm the fevered man.

"Yes; but it ain't all right," said he, "him there, that's the one as took me afore when I was doing nothing. I tell you I ain't going to be took by him alive. I'm damned if I shall."

"Keep down, my man," said Mr. Tagson, trying to assist Barringer, as Petrel became more unruly. "You need not be afraid. You're not wanted this time. Go to sleep."

With this he turned sharply round and left the room, followed by Mrs. Phidias.

"Ah, how very odd, Mrs. Phillips—Phidias—I beg pardon," said he, going down stairs, "I am so much obliged to you, ma'am, for the view of those rooms. They will suit excellently. I engage them provisionally and conditionally, provided the gentleman who occupies them has no objection to change. Very odd, my meeting Mr. Blai—that gentleman I mean—made sure I recognised an old

friend. And that poor wandering creature upstairs, he evidently thought he recognised an old enemy—ha, ha—he must be in a dreadful state of fever; has he been ill long, ma'am, may I ask?"

"He only came into the house half-an-hour ago," said Mrs. Phidias.

"Indeed! he is shocking bad. His hand is like a furnace. I tell you what I give my horses when they are feverish, and sometimes to my wife and pigs, when they are out of sorts; that is, a mixture of gruel and porter, with some Epsom salts in it, and brought to a good heat. Excellent stuff, ma'am. I'll take the liberty of calling again tomorrow, and leave half a week's rent as guarantee. Good afternoon, Mrs. Phillips—I beg pardon—Phidias."

CHAPTER XIX.

MR. GEORGE PHIDIAS.

MR. TAGSON, like the florid and respectable farmer he was, pursued his way slowly along the pavement of Cherry Gardens, debating in his mind whether a pavement so utterly uncomfortable and dilapidated could have been constructed of anything but cherry stones. As he pursued his way, the natural course of events led him to that most artful of places, Mount Pleasant, which, with a week's refuse littered about it, showed a strong inclination to return to its original ante-Masonic condition. Mr. Tagson paused thoughtfully, and, as he did so, he became aware that an individual in the uniform of the Metropolitan Police was doing precisely the same thing, at the opposite corner of the tiny square. Mr. Tagson looked and looked again. The policeman did likewise. Mr. Tagson gave an almost imperceptible shake of the head: the policeman gave an almost imperceptible wink, whereupon the jolly farmer, after

having looked round gently, pursued his way, past the policeman, round the corner into Honeysuckle Lane, and turned into the yardway of a bankrupt contractor, where he paused. The policeman sauntered after him.

"Well, Davis," said Mr. Tagson in a confidential sort of way, "that's a rum start, seeing you in this here quarter. How the deuce have you got down here? Reduced, eh?"

"Redooced, and be dem to them," said Mr. Davis, leaning his long figure against the shady wall.

"Now, you were a smart man, Davis," said the farmer; "you were always a smart man. That wasn't it, Davis, was it?"

"No, that wasn't it," said the policeman candidly. "I used to have a drop too much, sometimes."

"Ah, that was it, Davis, was it?" said Mr. Tagson. "I remember you always could do a bit of liquor."

"And what's your little game down here?" asked the policeman, eyeing his friend narrowly.

"You've got a pretty quiet neighbourhood to look after, down here, Davis," said Mr. Tagson, evasively.

"Quiet!" answered Davis. "They are all in a gallopin' consumption, I think."

"You don't particularly like that, do you? That's only natural for a smart man."

"I likes the place where there's plenty of life," said Davis. "Can't you do something for a fellow? I'm sober now."

"I'll see what I can do for an old friend, if he is sober and obliging. Just write your name and address down here."

"You'd better write it, for I have no pencil; Davis, L 99, 1, Albemarle Court, Albemarle Street, Lambeth."

"Very good," said Mr. Tagson, putting his pocket-book back. "Now, what persons have you got at 12, Cherry Gardens?"

"Let's see," said Mr. Davis, "number twelve. That's where that fellow Harrick lives, ain't it?"

"Harrick?" enquired Mr. Tagson. "Who and what is he? Tenant in chief or lodger, old or young, drunk or sober?"

"He is the spouting cove," answered Davis, "and as sober as a judge. Wish he wasn't. I'd run him in, sharp."

"Oh, he is as sober as a judge, is he, and a spouting cove. Is he often sober?"

"Often!" repeated L 99, "he's always at it. A deal too sober. It's a bad sign in a workin' man."

"Quite so, Mr. Davis. He should be jolly. 'Where drink and plenty cheers the labouring swain,' eh?"

"Yes, that's it. He ought to be somewhat like his pal the landlord. That's a jolly fellow for you."

"That is Mr. Phidias, I suppose. Now what do you know about this Phidias?"

"Phidias, that's the name; or J. F. as they calls 'im. I don't know much about him, except that he can lush like old boots, and don't mind standing a drop occasionally. He's always half slewed, and, by Jove, here he comes."

Here, indeed, came an individual of decayed military appearance, who looked as if he was trying to form himself into a square. He dressed by the somewhat uneven line of the pavement, and while stroking an iron-grey moustache with one hand, muttered to himself in the most earnest manner. As he came along Tagson stepped back a few paces, and Davis advanced. Mr. Phidias looked up, and as his feeble eye beheld the man of the law, his face broke into a feeble smile. He stopped and steadied himself by the bankrupt's feeble railings.

"Good evening, sir," said L 99, touching his helmet; "hope you are quite well, sir?"

"Davis, my good fellow," said Mr. Phidias, "this is a wicked world. I pity it, Davis, extremely, and I pity you."

"Oh, come, sir, don't do that," said the engine of the law, good-naturedly.

"I must, Davis. Why must I? 'Cause you are no longer a man. You've lost your glorious lib'ty."

"My what, sir?" enquired Davis, who, expe-

rienced as he was, failed to catch the mumbling sound.

"Nemmind, Davis," said Mr. Phidias, smiling forgiveness. "It's a' right; when do you get your next livery?"

"Oh, come now, none of that," said Davis, remonstratively. "It's a uniform, it ain't a livery."

"It's a liv'ry Davis—why, Davis, my good fellow! 'Cause it was put on to your back by the man that bowled me over—who bowled us all over—and he's made you wear the badge of slavery."

"It's hard work, if that's what you mean," said the policeman.

"No, Davis, good fellow," said Mr. Phidias, steadying himself by one of the Metropolitan buttons; "it's the badge of slavery. The man that bowled me over made a slave of you, and robbed you of glorious lib'ty."

"All right, sir," said the slave, taking the free man's arm, "let me walk home with you."

"Davis, good fellow," said Mr. Phidias, drawing himself up with dignity, "excuse me. You're a Peelite."

"I ain't nothing in particular," said the officer.

"Yes you are. You can't help being a Peelite—and I shall not walk with a Peelite in public." Saying which, Mr. Phidias made a dignified and independent stride into the middle of the road that nearly upset him.

"All right, sir," said the Peelite, unable to repress a smile at the ludicrous figure. "I thought I'd be friendly, that's all."

"Yes, I daresay, certainly, a' right," said Mr. Phidias, who was just going to repent his independent move, when he caught sight of the policeman's furtive smile, and grew excited thereby. "Haha, minion, myrmidon," cried he, "thou shalt not escape the avenging hand of Time, thou slave; begone, creature of a base progenitor."

It was ludicrous enough to see the gaunt and decayed figure, with outstretched arm, and a tongue as unsteady as his legs, bringing out the stagey language of his youth. He was not an unknown figure in the square, and several small boys were preparing to issue forth and surround him; while the man of order was speculating whether he should leave the inhabitant of Cherry Gardens to himself, when a young man came up hastily and caught Phidias' arm.

"That's lucky for me, J. F.," said he with some warmth. "Come along, old file. I thought you'd be out."

"Henry Mivor, sir," said Phidias vainly endeavouring to liberate his arm. "I allow no interference."

"Never mind, old boy, I know what o'clock it is, and I have something important to tell you."

"Henry Mivor," repeated Phidias solemnly,

"No offence to you, but there stands a myrmidon and a minion."

"Yes, I know all about it," said Mivor; we'll have his number one of these days—but come along. I have a couple of prime cigars, and I daresay you can give me some tea. I want to tell you something."

"Tea!" said the decayed man, "tea blongs to free breakfast table, and the missus likes it."

"Of course she does," said Mivor, walking the other off and throwing a wink at L 99. "You are a rum old file, J. F., 'pon my soul you are. Can't you leave the police alone. They'll have you one of these days."

"Have me!" said Phidias, suddenly getting excited again and standing still; "they have had me all along, they are having me every day, they have jumped on me, they have walked over me, and you say this myrmidon, this minion, will have me. Haha! where is he?"

"No, no, I didn't mean that," said Mivor, dragging him on, "but I'll explain when we get home. Do you know that we are going to get up an enormous gigantic demonstration against free trade?"

"Demstration agnst free trade," said Phidias, trying to pause again. "Who's it going to be?"

"Why all of us," said Mivor, pulling him along as they entered Cherry Gardens. "It will

be a gigantic protest on the part of every individual man who has been ruined by free trade. Such a thing has never been seen in the world. Of course you'll belong to it, old file; you'll be a main-stay."

"Yes, I'll be a main-stay," repeated J. F., stumbling along, "I'll tell them all about it."

"We'll wake them up, and no mistake. There, gentlemen, there's the silk trade."

"The silk trade!" repeated Mr. Phidias; "the most flourishing and glorious industry in the country."

"The silk trade, gentlemen," continued Mivor, opening the small gate, "to which I had the honour of belonging—and very prominently belonging. Now then, here we are. I can smell the tea."

"I can smell something," muttered Mr. Phidias, who from force of habit was adjusting himself and getting what he called "all square for the missus," "but it ain't the tea. It's the gas they've cut off. They've bowled me over again."

"Never mind, we'll have it on again, if it's off," said Mivor, catching his man under the arm, and walking him in as the door was opened by invisible hands; "where shall we go, Mrs. F.?"

"Oh, if you please, into the kitchen, Harry, and thank you," said the bright-eyed lady from behind the door.

"Into the kitchen—do you hear?" said Mr.

Phidias, marching very erect; "the missus has said so. Lead on."

Mivor led the way through the dark and narrow passage into the kitchen, where a small but bright fire lit up the twilight that reigned in it with a smiling glow. The window was open, and through half a dozen common roses in pots one could catch a glimpse of the tiniest garden, with an apologetic grass plot, enclosed by a dirty brick wall, and frowned upon and overshadowed by the houses in Rose Terrace. It was a pitiful habitation for a gentleman to come to; but the sadness of it was not felt by him as it was by the woman, whose life and labour were confined by the dirty and smoky bricks. Did you ever think of that, George Phidias? There was a time when you would have smiled incredulously if any one told you that you would come to inhabit such a dwelling. There was a time—long before your eyes got bloodshot and your hand unsteady, when the careworn little woman by your side was a sweet girl of nineteen, with a pretty blush, glossy hair (it is grey now), and the loveliest and brightest eye in or out of Manchester—when you would have defied Fate itself to overwhelm you with adversity and render you incapable of giving that sweet girl her due. Free trade has done it all, George Phidias. Nothing but free trade. You are blameless. But see; while free trade has trampled

upon you, and made you the wretch you are, has it played the same ruthless game with the girl who took you for better for worse? She was supposed to be inexperienced then, and a little flighty. She is long past that, of course; there is not much rosiness in her cheek now, and her hand trembles sometimes; but it is only from hard work, and because she must wipe away the tears that come welling into her eyes. Look, George, and be ashamed of yourself; how she bustles about, and is prepared to do her duty, while you sit helplessly in your chair. George does look ashamed of himself—for he is alone with his wife—and begins to feel, as usual, that he is a bad lot.

“Won’t you say a word to me, Mary?” says he, after following her with his eyes for some minutes.

The little woman made no answer, and kept her face studiously away from him.

“I’m not so very bad, Mary,” said he again, sitting up straight and taking off his hat. “I can say the creed.”

“You shall do no such thing,” said she, turning upon him with indignation. “It’s bad enough without adding blasphemy.”

“I only meant that I could; I did not mean to say that I would,” argued the master of the house, with much deference; “but it’s hard when

a man has borne the arrows and slings of a sea of troubles, that his own wife won't speak."

She was still silent, but there came a slight sound as of a suppressed sob.

"I know I am not equal to you, Mary; but does it behove you to show anger to a weak vessel? I am a weak vessel."

"Oh! George," said his wife, vigorously plying the bellows, so that the fire leaped out as if it would kiss her. "You know that it is not for myself I am angry, but for Lizzie. What is to become of the girl if you go on like this?"

"I sha'n't go on like this, Mary; 'pon my honour, I sha'n't. They are going to get up a free trade demstrashun, and that will put me on my legs again. Lizzie is a high-prishpled girl, I hope; and she'll marry Barringer some day."

"No indeed she sha'n't," said Mrs. Phidias, getting up. "You need not mention that again, George."

"Well, then, she'll marry Harrick, or Mivor, or somebody else."

"Do you know that Harrick has come back, and sent us an invalid who is sleeping in his bed? The poor fellow seems very ill—been in some railway accident, I think. And do you know what he said?"

"He said that he was very ill—been in some railway acsdent," murmured J. F., drowsily.

"Listen to me, you wicked man, and sit up straight. Harrick told me the other day it was quite probable that he might go away for a long time—perhaps for ever, and we had better look about for another lodger."

This piece of intelligence produced a certain effect upon Phidias, who opened his eyes and stared mildly.

"Give my compliments to Harrick, and tell him I am very sorry he's leaving."

"But, George," cried his wife, impatiently stamping her foot, "Can't you think of business for a moment? What is to become of us if Harrick should leave? You know he has paid the rent for the last two years."

"I ain't eka to you, Mary. I am a weak vessel; but can't you give him a hint that he had better marry Lizzie? He'll be obliged to stay and pay the rent then. Give me a cup of tea, I'm so thirsty."

Mrs. Phidias sighed deeply, and poured out the tea, apparently the only thing her husband was able to take. She thought of her beloved child, and the time when she herself had been young; when she had looked with delight towards the man she loved; and as her thoughts wandered away into that region of her buried joys, she forgot that he was sitting before her, denouncing the

state of the world in general, and Harrick in particular, for trying to "bowl him over."

Harry Mivor, meanwhile, seemed less eager for the refreshment to which he had invited himself, than one would have supposed from his hurry to reach the house. He found his way out of the kitchen into the front room easily enough; for although he was not an inmate of the house, he was a cousin, who was constantly about the premises, and quarrelled with Mr. and Mrs. Phidias as if he had been their son.

"Come, Lizzie," said he, brushing away the felt, "it's not right, that you should be pent up in this abominable room all the evening. Come for a walk; it is lovely weather."

"I am not pent up," said the young lady, who was working on a low chair by the window, "and don't call this room abominable. It is nothing of the kind."

"I beg your pardon, Lizzie. I won't say that. But come, will you?"

"I should like to, but I must not. I have promised to remain with the sick man."

"What sick man?"

"Harrick has sent a poor man here, who was very seriously injured in an accident."

"Harrick again! Everybody seems to think of that Harrick," said Mivor peevishly.

"I wish everybody would," answered the young lady.

"At any rate, he is not in want of friends here," said he doggedly.

"I don't know about that," replied Lizzie sharply. "Somebody seems to dislike him very much."

"You are quite right, Liz. I hate him, and I think he hates me."

"Hates you!" laughed the girl, "I am sure he never thinks of you."

"Oh, don't he though, when he wants a speech reported. Didn't he shake me by the hand the other night?"

"And you said it was a splendid speech, and you thought him a great speaker."

"Well, and what if I did? I can hate a great speaker, I suppose. Mirabeau was a great speaker, and he was hated."

"I don't know any history, Harry. You always forget that."

"I don't know much," said Mivor humbly, feeling that he had taken a mean advantage. "I wish you'd let me teach you."

"And you begin by hating my friends," said she. "That's a nice way of teaching!"

"I won't, I promise you," cried the young reporter, "if you will only dislike him a little—a very little."

"And if I disliked him the least tiny morsel—when you know how kind he has been—I am sure you would despise me."

"Never. Nothing in the world would make me do that, Lizzie."

"I wish I could say the same thing," said she pertly.

"Well, then, I did not mean it," said Mivor, thoroughly humbled. "But it is too provoking to hear you praise a working-man."

"A working-man!" repeated Lizzie with scorn. "Was not Michel Angelo a working-man, then?"

"Hallo," said Mivor, somewhat startled by this outbreak of history, "have you been reading about him?"

"No, I have 'not," answered the girl, "but Harrick has told me all about him, and a wonderful story it is."

"Yes, it is wonderful," said Mivor, feeling himself on unsafe ground. "I'll tell you what, Lizzie. When I become a great man, and editor of our paper, I'll make him one of my leader writers. I am sure he is fit for it, with training."

"How very generous of you! I am sure Harrick will be much obliged to you, when that time comes. Only for the present, don't hate him, that's all."

"Of course not. But do come for a walk. The evening is lovely, and the park will be splendid."

"Why will you ask me, Harry? I have told you I can't." And she looked yearningly at the sun-coloured sky.

"If you promised to remain with the sick man, why are you not there now?"

"Because Mr. Barringer is watching by the bedside."

"Well, then, won't Barringer watch by the bedside for another hour? You'll be ill if you don't go out."

"I am sure mamma will require me, for papa is not very well," said Lizzie feebly, feeling her resolution going.

"No, that she won't," said Mivor with decision. "I'll go and ask her myself."

"There's no need for that," said Mrs. Phidias, coming into the room. "I think it is quite right that Lizzie should go out for a little while. My dear, you can put on your blue bonnet and lace shawl. Run upstairs quickly."

"And what about the poor man up-stairs, mamma?" said the conscientious girl, rising from her seat.

"I'll arrange that with Barringer," said Mivor hastily, fearing that some objection might be raised; "I'll get him to stop for another hour."

"Yes, yes; run upstairs, my dear," said Mrs. Phidias; "put on the blue bonnet and shawl."


Mr. Barringer proved quite willing to remain in charge of the invalid, and the blue bonnet and shawl seemed as delighted as their owner to come out into the open; for when Lizzie stood on the steps, with her pretty little face peeping forth underneath the one, and her lithe figure enveloped in the other, it would have been difficult to find anything neater and trimmer in Lambeth. As they stepped out of the gate, Cherry Garden was swept by a delicious breeze of new-mown hay.

"I say, Lizzie," said Mivor, sniffing the perfume, "when I get editor of our paper, I shall keep a big haystack in front of my house."

CHAPTER XX.

HARRICK AT HOME.

MR. GEORGE PHIDIAS was still sitting in front of his kitchen fire, in an attitude of pensive humility; but that gentleman's mind had gradually worked round from the indignation excited by myrmidons and free trade to a state of cheerful confidence in his future. His attitude was still humble, because "the missus" was bustling about in the front room; but in his eye there lay hidden a smile that was ready to break out at the slightest encouragement; and a very acute ear might have caught a muttered invocation to let the world jog along as it will, for that he, and probably a good many others, had made up their minds to be free and easy still. In fact, the master of the house was "coming round," as he called it; and whether the sound of approaching footsteps brought him round altogether or not, he certainly somewhat elevated his voice while assuring his hearers that somebody's knapsack was number ninety-two.



"I'll tell you what it is, Mivor, my boy," said Mr. Phidias, addressing the quaint shadow which the kitchen fire threw upon the wall, "you've got hold of the right end of the stick. Don't let 'em alone. Worry the life out of them. Let 'em have it. Cats, boys, Cats!"

The shadow bobbed up and down, and seemed to shake with suppressed laughter; and Mr. Phidias himself chuckled at the brilliancy of his ideas. He became confidential.

"I'll tell you what it is, Harry," said he, "if they are going to get up that demstrashun you mus let me have a hand in it. I'm sly at that. In Man'shter, when I was on the Town Cowshel, I was sly, and I got up the jolliest row in the world. It was better than a 'lecshun riot. Don't ye see?"

The representative of Mr. Mivor evidently saw it all, for he wagged his head about in a very droll manner.

"I can tell you," continued Mr. Phidias, somewhat proudly, "that I was a man of consideble influunsh. When the Duke of Wellington came and dined with us, I sat on his right, and he ses to me, 'Mr. Phidias,' ses he, 'haven't I seen your face before?' He was a great man, was the Duke. Here's health to him."

Mr. Phidias devoutly lifted his cup of tea, and to his own astonishment emptied it.

"I don't care who the man is," said he, while his eyes glowed with humane feeling, "but if he is a man he's a brother, and if he is a brother he's a man—except one, and that's my brother-in-law. But what is the use of repining!"

Mr. Phidias had stretched out one arm, and was beginning to twitter and chirp like a young bird, when his eye fell upon a dark and tall form that filled up the kitchen door, and a pair of eyes that were fixed upon him with stern and silent rebuke. Mr. Phidias dropped his arm and dropped his song, and involuntarily pulled himself straight—straighter even than he had done for the missus. Still the figure moved not, but regarded him with ominous silence. Mr. Phidias pulled himself still straighter, and stroking his moustache, made a most dignified bow, and said, in measured terms—

"My dear sir, I am truly delighted to welcome you back from your excushon. Pray be seated, be seated—take a chair—make yourself at home—this is lib'ty hall."

"Phidias, you miserable wretch, you have been drinking again. I have only been four days away."

"My dear sir," said the master of the house, with some confusion; "My dear Warren, my noble Harrick, you are too hard on a poor man who has been bowled over by misfortune. Pray be seated."

"I have called you a miserable wretch," said Harrick, slowly, "because I can find no harder term to express my contempt and horror. You are a beast, Phidias — nothing more than a beast."

"I'll tell you what it is, Harrick," said Phidias, with a pitiful attempt at dignity, "I am a gentleman by birth and educashun, and I beg you to remember that. I've not been 'customed to be addressed in that manner and in my own house, and I won't stand it, sir!"

"Pah! you'll stand anything, except sober hard work," said Harrick.

"Then I'm blowed if I stand being domineered over by a common labouring man. Do you think because I'm bowled over and unfortunate, that I have lost my glorious lib'ty? Never, sir, never!"

"Look you here, Phidias," said Harrick, slowly approaching him; "you'll have any amount of glorious liberty in speech. You can call me what you like, and say what you please. But let us understand each other as regards your doing. Are you sober enough to listen? Answer me."

"Yes—yes—of course I am," said Phidias, pulling himself straight again, and thoroughly cowed by the tone of authority.

"Very well; then listen and remember this. You have solemnly bound yourself to abstain from drink, and upon that condition I have spared

you. If there had been nobody but you, you know very well that I would have had no mercy on you; but it is for the sake of the good, kind, patient woman, your wife, and your daughter, who has grown to be a woman, that I have had mercy and forbearance; but mark me," said he, as his firm hand gripped the man's wrist, "if you do not abstain from drink, and become sober and industrious, I shall summons you for the money you owe me. I have never threatened in vain; if you boast of your glorious liberty, you shall work for it, or take the consequence."

Having said these words in a calm but determined voice, Harrick released the wrist, and without uttering another word, slowly left the kitchen and went up-stairs. In the passage he met Mrs. Phidias, who, as she saw him, ran down eagerly, and grasping his hand, began to say something which he stopped.

"Never mind, little mother. I have had it out with J. F. downstairs, and told him he was a bad boy. But how tired and weary you look! I am afraid you have been troubling too much with that man up-stairs, and we'll have you ill."

"Oh, no fear of that, Warren," said she, with a cheerful laugh, although she did look wan and weary, "he is now in a fine sleep that will do him good, and Mr. Barringer is with him. Lizzie would not leave him at first, but Harry Mivor

offered to take her out for a walk, and I thought it would do her good, poor thing."

"I'm sure it will, and I am glad she has gone. Now don't you fret, little mother. Sir John Brussell is coming to-morrow, and he will have a look at you as well."

So saying, Harrick patted her hand as a son might have done, and went to his room. He found Barringer sitting before the open window, smoking and looking up into the sky. He nodded as Harrick entered, who having thrown a look at the sleeper, seated himself by his friend's side at the open window.

"And so, you are still determined to go," said he, putting his hand on the other's knee.

"I am for a while. The spirit of roving and restlessness is strong upon me. I must break loose."

"And where do you think of going to? Is it back to Italy, or to the isles of Greece?"

"I don't care," said Barringer gloomily, "to flit about from place to place and stop nowhere will suit me best."

"You are in one of your downcast moods, and you think this the cure. I can't help thinking that it is nothing of the kind. I should say to linger in some delightful spot, see new faces, make fresh acquaintances, and begin a friendship that will last long enough to distract your thoughts is more likely to benefit you."

"You speak like a man who does not know what it is to have these moods," said Barringer.

"But I do. I know them but too well."

"You!" said Barringer, smiling ironically. "Nay, Harrick, you'll not make me believe that. You who are always bright, and hopeful, and active, and in the midst of some great scheme, you could not be given to that hopeless state of mind that comes upon me like a cloud—nay, like a mountain sometimes. I'll be bound that you have just returned from a meeting of the Brotherhood."

"I have," said Harrick, who had also lighted a pipe and was leaning out of the window.

"And you have spoken there with men, and taken an interest in their schemes. But if you felt convinced that they were all rogues, that they were all dishonest in thought if not in deed; that they were all self-interested, as they are; that they were all ready to sacrifice each other for private ends; would you still feel an interest in them?"

"If I believed all men to be dishonest, I would have to believe myself dishonest as well, would I not?" said Harrick.

"I did not mean all," replied Barringer, "I meant the majority."

"Barringer," said Harrick, "that idea oppressed me, dreadfully, at one time. When I began to find that I had entered into a foolish and unequal contract, and that all men were determined to keep me

to it, and screw out of me what they could, I felt as if a new and fearful light had gone up before my eyes; I thought that the world was peopled with just such dishonest, self-interested men as you describe."

"And is it not?" asked Barringer. "Is there a man you know, who does not strive to push some weaker man to the wall?"

"I was for some months in a state of despair," continued Harrick, "until light, at last, broke upon me. If it had not, I think my reason must have gone; but instead of going, reason came, and I found this—that however dishonest and self-interested men might be, they had never been otherwise, and they never will be otherwise. I am firmly convinced that, in the main, the world has been what it is now—neither better nor worse, and that as an inhabitant of that world I am like the rest. My peculiar circumstances may be a trifle harder, but is that a reason why I should sink down in despair, and throw up the sponge? As well might I refuse to walk because my legs are not so strong as another man's. Shall I say that there is no enjoyment, no happiness in the world, while these glorious stars shine down upon us? No, Barry; you know I do not believe in the progressive goodness of the human race—but I should be sorry, like you, to believe in its progressive badness."

"I never said so," remonstrated Barringer, gloomily.

"You imply it. You think the world has never been so bad as it is now, others think it has never been so good; but it seems to me, that under a free Government, in all ages, man has lived, and is living, up to an average of honesty and happiness."

"And if that be so," said Barringer, "how is it that this world is so full of misery and injustice?"

"It is the struggle for existence," answered Harrick, "the struggle that has lasted for ages. And it is a cheerful thought that the world has grown no weaker in that struggle, for that is its greatest danger. Men will always be self-interested, and many, if it suits their purpose, dishonest. We shall never improve in that respect; but what we may improve in is the maintenance of public laws, and the upholding of a small but strict code of public morality, for the regulation of that very struggle for existence. If the world is full of misery and injustice now, think what it would have been if those laws had not been upheld."

"I can scarcely imagine it in a more desperate condition," said Barringer.

"What!" exclaimed the young artisan, "knowing that our fathers and forefathers have fought the battle so bravely, and with so much success, and seeing that we fight so well, would you call this world anything but glorious?"

"Then why should you work for its improvement, if it is so glorious?"

"Precisely because it would not and could not be so, unless we used our talents to rearrange and redistribute, and keep it up to the mark."

"In fact," said Barringer with a sneer, "you think this world glorious, because you, and men like you, consent to do the work of the Almighty."

"Let us not introduce the Almighty here," said Harrick quietly; "since our minds cannot encompass His attributes, we need not discuss them. But I believe that this world is fair because men are ready to keep it so. Why, the very fields require ploughing and harrowing, lest they become unproductive."

"And what does it all come to? What have *you* gained or profited by these exertions?" asked Barringer.

"I, individually, nothing as yet; perhaps I never will. As a people we have not gained much, but a little is enough in each generation."

"And you consent to bear vexation, trouble, and insult, to incur hatred and ingratitude, for so little gain?" asked Barringer.

"It is not only the little progress, Barry," said Harrick, "it is also the fearful loss that would come upon us if we did not advance steadily. If no more is to be had, we must needs be content with what we can get."

"But why," contended the painter somewhat impatiently, "why are *you* exactly the man to exert yourself in this?"

"Each man should do that to the measure of his gifts. If the world could be kept abreast by means of machinery, if all reform and redistribution could be effected by electricity or steam, few men would trouble themselves to work as they do. But as man is the only being who can think for himself, so he alone can, and must, help himself."

"Idle talk," said the painter, with a harsh laugh. "It is all vanity and vexation. Everything is topsy-turvy; everything is upside down. Believe me, Harrick, nothing will ever alter it. The best wisdom is to let fools be fools, and rogues, rogues; stand by, watch, and pick out from among them what you can use."

"Oh, I have no objection to that," said Harrick quickly. "Let fools remain fools, and rogues, rogues, since there must be a large number of both in the world. I know it would be a hopeless task to make all mankind wise and honest, or even wiser and honest than it has ever been, but we must take care that it does not fall behind; that it does not deteriorate; that physically, even more than morally, it should be kept up to the full average. As our numbers increase year by year, the difficulty becomes greater, and the greater becomes the necessity for each man to be his own

guardian. Look you—as long as men have voices they will speak; as long as they have passions they will be influenced; as long as they have a desire they will struggle for its gratification. The only question is, who shall lead them? If they are led by those who understand neither them nor the times, they will warp their own progress. Is it not, therefore, the duty of those who do understand them, and who can read the signs of the times, to place themselves in the front rank, to spare no trouble, to count no labour wearisome, to smile upon ingratitude, to despise material profit, to hold in view that alone which is useful and noble, in order that this great throbbing life of the people, this mighty power, may not be wasted or ill-guided. Why, my dear Barry, it is this vast and popular power which is the secret of all progress. It is always there—in no danger of dying, but sometimes in danger of overflowing—growing with every year, and pushing forward into the world. We are surrounded on all sides by hostile forces. We are opposed by vested interest, by landed proprietors, by employers who are fond of power, by parsons who struggle for dogma, by lawyers who fight for fees, by noblemen who want to retain influence, and by all men who have either saved or inherited enough to keep them idle, and who think that none of the curse of Adam should fall upon them. But opposed to them stands the

great Brotherhood of Labour, in endless battle array, and our cry is to make 'Labour less irksome, and luxury less easy.' Every year those who are too rich must give up some of their wealth, those who are too powerful must give up some of their power, those who are too influential must give up some of their influence; for it is by that, and that only, that we can adjust the balance, and put ourselves upon an equal footing with our forefathers. They were happy, free, and prosperous, and if we wish to remain so too, we must obtain the recognition of our principles: and, by the everlasting youth of the people, we shall accomplish it. We have patience, endurance, and hope, and, if we should need it, strength to force everything into obedience. We are fighting a good fight. From hill to hill we see the glow of our watch-fires, and from stronghold to stronghold the enemy retreats. Come, Barringer, we are both young, and vigorous, and healthy; why should you not be as full of hope and strength and desire for battle as I? Wake up out of your slumber, and remember that you are a soldier, and that you cannot lay down your arms in the face of an enemy."

It was too dark in the room to see the expression of Harrick's face, but though, in deference to the sick man, he never allowed his voice to rise, there was a ring in its sonorous tones, as of a clarion heard afar, among the hills, calling upon warriors to

greet the rising sun. Barringer was most greatly moved. He had been carried away as much by the music of his friend's voice as by the charm of his eloquence, and with deep emotion he seized his hand.

"Warren," said he, "you almost persuade me to be full of strength and hope like yourself. But my strength is of no avail, and I was crushed before I could have any hope."

"No, no," said Harrick, promptly; "you have only consented to believe so, that's all."

"Tell me, then," said Barringer, "could you ever lose faith in yourself? Could you ever be overwhelmed with sorrow?"

"Not easily," answered Harrick gravely. "I have almost been tempted to defy sorrow."

"Even if you saw yourself cut off from your dearest hopes, or debarred from your innermost desire?"

"My ambition and desire being eternal and ever-living art, cannot be torn from me," said Harrick. "Why, Ververt told me to-day that I wanted two great teachers, and one of them was sorrow."

"You speak and feel like a master who knows his power," said Barringer; "you can overcome anything."

"Nay," said Harrick, with a short laugh. "I am only a working-man, and a poor one too. The only property I have is a small freehold worth £5 a year, in Coalisle, which belonged to my mother."

"A working-man!" exclaimed the artist; "a working-man with genius, whose eyes burn with a holy fire. You are a child of the people, with the noble aspirations of our race. It is easy for you to have hope. But for me, curse the hands that disturbed my life. I tell you, Warren, a blight lies upon me. I am fettered by a chain which is unbreakable, and which galls me beyond measure."

"You said something of the kind that night on the bridge," said Harrick. "Do you remember what I said?"

"Yes," replied Barringer, "you said, a man who flies from one enemy, meets a dozen; he who faces half-a-dozen, seldom finds one."


"And did you not acknowledge the truth of that? Have you faced your enemy boldly?"

"My enemy is more than a dozen, it's ten thousand! There is no hope for me!"

"If there is no hope, there is no life. I saved yours, which you had nearly taken. Are you sorry I saved it thus far?"

"I would have been if any other man had saved it. But you, Warren, have occasionally given me a glimpse of hope, and of a new life. For your sake I live on."

"Nay, Barringer; live for the sake of yourself, and brave your foe. I know not who or what he is, but find him out, grapple with him, give him battle to the last drop of blood, and you must win.



Now I am going for a stroll in this lovely moonlight. Petrel sleeps quietly; you can come out with me."

"No," said Barringer quietly, "I had rather be alone for awhile. Go by yourself."

Knowing that the unhappy artist preferred solitude, Harrick went out by himself, and framed his philosophy of life by moonlight. It was rather late when he returned. Phidias, after having shown his temper to his wife and daughter in a most lamentable manner, had at last withdrawn to what he called his den. His wife had crept up to her bed, wearied and weighed down by grief. She had asked Lizzie to come with her, but for some reason the daughter begged to remain a while longer. Knowing her odd ways, the mother objected not; and Lizzie sate herself by the fire on a low chair, and gazed pensively in the glow. She heard Harrick's firm step approaching the house, and got up to rush away. But it was too late. The firm step was at the door.

"Lizzie," said he, with gentle voice, "are you still up? You should have gone to bed hours ago."

"I am not at all tired," said she, smiling in his face; "and you don't even say good evening. I haven't seen you for a week."

"Good evening, child," said he gravely, and with a touch of tenderness in his voice.

"You are not angry with me, Warren, are you?" asked the girl, stealing a furtive glance at his eyes.

"Angry!" said he, stroking her silken hair; "why should I be angry?" She shrank from his touch, and kept her face down towards the fire.

"Because I promised to remain up-stairs with your patient, and went out instead."

"And did you not enjoy the delicious breeze, and the scent of the hay, and the smell of summer, Lizzie?"

"Not if you are angry, Warren," said she, with another furtive look at his eyes. He rested his arm on the mantelpiece and smiled, as one might smile at a child.

"Could I be angry with you for doing what I did myself? I was glad of it. Keep yourself strong and able to work, like a brave little girl. Now, I wonder if you are going to be angry at what I want to say to you? Shall I say it?"

"Yes, say it," said she, with heightened colour, and hardly able to keep her voice from trembling.

"I have been convinced to-night of what I suspected for some time," said Harrick, and paused for a moment.

Poor Lizzie pressed one of her little hands against her burning forehead, and averted her head.

"To-night," continued Harrick, "as I looked at your mother, and saw how pale, and thin, and weary she was, it struck me that she had been stinting herself to pay some of the debts. Is that so?"

Lizzie made no answer.

"I was utterly shocked to think that this should be so, for I look upon her as my mother, and upon you as my little sister; for I have neither. If I had them, God knows I would love them; but as that cannot be, I must look after you two. Now, while I was in the country, a kind old gentleman gave me something which I was to apply for the benefit of a friend who needed it. It's a guinea, Lizzie. Now, I tell you, you should buy some port wine and beef-tea, and nice little things for Mrs. F.; and when she asks you where you got the money, why, say I found it."

He held the coin out to her, but the girl sat on her low chair with averted face, and said not a word. Harrick looked at her in silence, for he knew what a strange little thing she was; then bending down, he gently removed the hand that shaded her eyes, and turned the sweet face to the light. She resisted with confusion and a deep blush, but Harrick had seen enough. The expression with which she looked into his eyes made him ponder.

"Poor child," said he, again stroking her hair,

and this time she did not shrink. "Is this world bitter to you also?"

"I do not know what I shall say," sobbed she, seizing one of his hands, and leaning her wet cheek against it. "You are so kind, so very kind to us, and everything around us seems as dark as night."

"Keep faith, child, keep faith. It shall not be all in vain."

"If I could only get some work, beside this sewing-machine work?" said she, releasing his hand suddenly and speaking rapidly—"if I could only get something that brought me a little more into the world? Don't you think, Warren, that I could go as nursery governess? I can speak a little French."

"Lizzie," said Harrick, as if inspired by a sudden thought, "are you a brave girl?"

"I am," said she, with a confident smile. "What is it?"

"Could you undertake the duties of housekeeper and manageress of an establishment like ours? You know what is required pretty well—there are three meals a day to be cooked."

"I can cook well enough," said she gaily, through her tears. "I'll make soup and all the rest with the best cook in Paris. But when it comes to scrubbing floors, I'm afraid I'm not strong enough."

"No, I don't think you are," said he, smiling,

"but if we get a strong woman to do the hard work, would you come and superintend, and see that all is neat and clean? I'll stand by you."

"In your place—in Mason's?" said she, her face beaming with joy. "I should like it of all things."

"I am empowered to offer you six-and-twenty pounds a year as manageress," said Harrick, with a smile; "we'll call you our Lady Superintendent."

"Twenty-six pounds a year!" said Lizzie, with a blush of pleasure. "Why, that's a tremendous sum."

"And this," said he, pressing her little hand, "will be the first instalment."

Lizzie looked down, and saw a bright guinea with a tiny hole in it, and the letters L. S. engraved on the side.

CHAPTER XXI.

PAGES OUT OF KATHERINE'S DIARY.

BEECHAM ABBEY, *Wednesday*.

LAST night I stole into the church again, and gratified the longing of my heart. There was nobody in the park to disturb me, and good old Andrew delights in being played to for an hour or so. "Lord love you, miss"—he will call me miss, although I have told him not to—"Lord love you, miss," said he, "if you was to play for six hours, miss, it would gladden the very heart in me, leastways, if it don't disturb some of them."

"Some of them, Andrew?" said I, seeing that he pointed with his thumb to somewhere outside the church; "who are they?"

"Why them as lies here," said Andrew, as if that was out of the question; "them as I have got to take care of."

"But I don't suppose that it matters much to them what is being done here," said I, rather amused by his assumed mystery.

"Oh, don't it, though," said Andrew, shaking his honest old head, gravely. "They are up to games, they are, and they are knowing."

I laughed, and looked at his long silvery hair, and his red eyelids, and into his deep blue eyes, but I could see no sign of madness in them.

"You may laugh, miss," said he, seriously, "but when you have been as long amongst them as I have been, you will be up to some of their tricks. They know me as well as I know them, and you should see them come gathering round me."

"Gathering round you, Andrew!" said I, somewhat astonished, "for shame—you should not be joking about such matters."

"Lord love you, miss, I'm not joking. I could not think of joking about them; but it's true as I tell you, miss. When the twilight is coming about, and the church is nearly dark, and you play the organ so sweet and soft, miss, and I stand blowing the bellows by the door, they come creeping in one by one, they do, and some of them sits in their own pews—and the master; they all sit in their family seat, of course, and I know 'em all, every one of them; and we nod to one another quite free-like, you know, miss; and some of the younger ones they come grouping round me, as if they did not quite dare to step forward."

"And who are these younger ones that are so timid," said I, determined to humour him.

"Why, all the young chaps that I have seen born in the place, and growing up, and making fools of themselves and marrying, and getting drunk of a Saturday, and being brought here long afore their time was up. They seem ashamed-like, miss, and linger around me, as if I could do 'em any good. And sometimes, miss, when you play mournful and sad kind of tunes, and I feel sad and down-like, they are all as miserable as can be; but when you play such sweet melodies as that one to the chief musician, about the panting hart, miss, we all feel as happy as we can, miss; and if it's not asking too much, miss, they would be so glad if you would play that again to them to-night, miss."

"Very well, Andrew," said I, gathering all my dignity, "I shall never play you anything but the most melancholy tunes, as you call them, if you persist in calling me miss—when I have told you so often that I am not a miss."

"Ma'am, begging your pardon," says Andrew, looking as unconvinced as ever.

"It's very unkind of you to call me names," said I, trying hard not to laugh.

"It's very hard not to call you miss, ma'am," says he.

"But I have told you that I was married—a long, long time."

"Yes, miss."

"Andrew!"

"I don't believe it, miss," said he, stoutly, and with a most emphatic nod. "It's out now, and I can't help it—there."

"You don't believe it! Then I won't believe a word of the rubbish that you have been telling me just now."

"Rubbish!" repeated he, with an expression as if he had been seriously hurt; "that's not rubbish. I wish everything was as true as that. They're waiting now to come in."

"And you won't believe what I tell you," said I, while, for some silly reason that I cannot explain, the tears started into my eyes. "You are my only companion down here, and you won't believe me; you bad man."

He looked at me with a puzzled air. "They are very fond of you," said he, after a moment. "They are all fond of you."

"What's that to me," cried I. "I can't see them, and won't see them; and I hate them, and you too. Go away. I shan't play to-night." As I stretched out my hand to point him the way, he caught it gently, and looked at it.

"There's no ring," said he, with a shrewd look.

"There is, though," said I, very foolishly; and unfastening the top button of my dress, I drew forth the tiny little gold ring that never leaves me, day or night. I held it up to him triumphantly,

although I could scarcely help smiling at the smallness of it.

"Is that it?" said Andrew, with a twinkle in his blue eyes. "Lord love you, who would have thought it now? It would not fit me, would it?"

He held up his great rough and horny hand, but he might as well have held up a ship's cable to the eye of a needle. It looked so ridiculous that I could not help laughing; but before I had laughed very much I felt the tears come out of my eyes, and I had actually to sit down and sob like a great baby: and that before a man too. But I didn't mind Andrew a bit. He has often seen me cry, and always looks as if he expected nothing else under the circumstances.

"There now," said Andrew, "you'll make them all uncomfortable. They are bad enough when you play sadly, but when you actually begin to greet, ma'am, they'll feel so bad, it will want a lot of playing to put them right again. Won't you give them that one to the chief musician? They are uncommon fond of it, and it will do you good."

I knew it would do me good, indeed. I longed to set my darling organ singing, so I quietly went up the creaking old stairs, and presently I had lost myself in the glorious melody. If I had been superstitious, I might have thought that Andrew was right, for somehow my thoughts wandered, and my fancies took shape, and started into life and

motion, and filled the whole church; and I made sure I could recognise some of the old knights and stately dames, whose portraits hang in this Abbey. And then the whole of my life seemed to pass before me. My youth, in the dark and dreary house in Edinburgh, with my mother for ever in tears, and my father either drunk or ill-tempered, and the horrid profligate men who came to gamble with each other in the back rooms, and to borrow money from my father, and swear at him, and fill the house with their horrible laughter and jests. Ah, me, that time is past now; but there seems a pleasure to me in writing down and recalling to my mind its strange history of sorrow.

The father that I have mentioned was not my real father, only a step-father—my own mother's second husband, and his name was Bell. The Blainvilles, as my father was proud of saying, were one of the oldest families in England, and he used to take me between his knees and say, "Kitty, remember that you are the only true scion of the only true branch of the Blainvilles, and never give up your right to the others." He was a good and kind man, although obstinate, and my mother cried very much when he died. She cried a great deal more, though, after she had become Mrs. Bell, and found out what sort of man her second husband was; and if it had not been for sweet, darling little Maud, I think she would have died a good deal

earlier than she did. When poor mamma was gone, I led for some years the most miserable life that a girl can lead, I think. I had nobody but darling Maud to take care of, and an old grumbling servant to speak to. A governess was supposed to come three times a week and teach me, but my father—that is, my stepfather—never looked after her or after me, and she very often stayed away. If I had not been so fond of reading, and taught myself playing on an old harp, I should, I think, have remained the most ignorant girl in the world.

I remember, however, as I grew up, that I was very thin and very pale, and dreadfully untidy about the hair and shoes, and I must have been a regular fright to look at. One evening, which I had spent as usual brooding over the fire, and wondering why my mother should have died so early, the old servant came to me laughing, and told me that my father wanted me down-stairs. I felt astonished, as he had never sent for me before, and I was more amazed than ever when old Ossory came up and said, I had better brush my hair and put on a clean pinafore, for that I was going to be married. I did not pay any attention to this at the time, because I had only just turned twelve; and I felt so indignant with my stepfather for treating me as he did, that I refused to do anything to my hair, and only put on my clean pinafore because the one I had on was really so very dirty.

When I entered the long, dreary, dark room, I saw my stepfather sitting at one end of the table, which was covered with dessert, and a second elderly gentleman at the other. It was my uncle Blainville, the head of the other branch of the house. I had seen him once or twice during my father's life, and disliked him. There was a third gentleman, whom I recognised as the minister of the neighbouring church.

My stepfather beckoned me to come to him. He was flushed with wine, and I stood aloof. "Kitty," said he, "would you like to have a house of your own, and servants of your own, and a purse full of money of your own, and do exactly as you please." I said of course that I should be very glad to change my present condition for one so much better. "Then," said he, "you shall marry your cousin Charles; for if you don't, you shall go with me to Australia, and leave little Maud behind." "I don't know my cousin Charles," said I. "But we do," said he; "and you had better be a good girl. Here he comes." There was a sound of wheels, and a coach stopped before the door, and presently Ossory came in with a lad not much bigger than myself, who scowled dreadfully at everybody. I don't exactly remember everything that took place, but I know that the gentleman in the white neckcloth put our hands together, though

the boy pulled his away, and said he was not going to get married to such a dirty little girl. But his father got very angry, and made him hold my hand. I could scarcely see him, the light was so dim; but I thought that he was a very unpleasant looking boy. However, my poor little head was all in a whirl, and I repeated something without knowing what, and he repeated something; and then Ossory came and took me back up-stairs, and the coach rolled away immediately afterwards; and that was all.

I did not know what it meant, and I was too proud to ask anybody; so I resolved to wait until my own mamma's brother, Dr. Plumper, should come to see me. He was my only friend, and whenever he came to see me I was happy. But as he lived in the neighbourhood of London, it did not happen very often. However, when he came soon after, I told him all; and he would scarcely believe me. He got pensive, and went away, and remained away all day; and I thought he had gone for good, which made me very unhappy; but in the evening he came back again, looking quite grave.

"Kitty," I remember him saying, "I find that it is so, and that nothing can alter it. Listen to me, child, and see whether you understand me. The Blainvilles are a very old family, and have been rich, but there is a feud of two hundred

years' standing, arising out of a dispute about a will. It has brought nothing but misery; every member has taken a side in the quarrel, brothers have sworn enmity to brothers, sisters have hated sisters; fortunes have been lost, lives have been ruined; it seems as if all were enslaved in hereditary bondage. Now Mr. Bell, your step-father, who had the charge of your money, and that of your sister, has speculated and gambled with it. He says that he was led into it by your uncle Blainville, who is the head of the rival branch of the house; at any rate, Mr. Bell owed him everything he possessed, and that everything belonged to you. So your uncle proposed that the debt should be wiped out by the marriage of the heirs of the two rival families, to which Mr. Bell consented; and so it has come about. Charles Blainville has been sent away to school in Belgium, and you will not see him again until he is grown up; so you had better not think about it for years to come. I have inquired into the legality of the marriage, and I am afraid he is your husband. I am very indignant with Mr. Bell. I have told him that he has committed a great wrong, and I have threatened to take you away with me. Will you come with me to Beecham?"

"Will Maud go with me?" I asked.

"No, Maud must remain with her father," answered Dr. Plumper. "Then I shall remain too,"

said I. "I promised mamma never to leave little Maud, and I must not." She was scarcely a year old; and as I could not leave her, I remained, and Dr. Plumper went back to Beecham.

There was some improvement in the way I was treated after that. I had regular masters, and I began to make a good deal of progress in my drawing and music. I was still alone with Maud and the old servant, for although Ossory was good to me when he came up—he looked exactly like the picture of the angel Gabriel, with his white hair—he was generally down-stairs attending on my father, whom I never saw. The only thing that I had ever heard about Charles Blainville was that he had become a bad boy, and had run away from school; but my uncle Plumper had told me not to think of him, and I did not.


Then there came a time when I felt lonely and miserable; and in the midst of it a voice spoke to me so kindly and sweetly, and took such interest in me, that I was suddenly overjoyed. My harp lost its music; the stars faded in beauty by the side of those splendid eyes that looked at me so strangely, and sent a thrill of rapture through me when they met mine. I thought there was something wild in them at times—something of a fallen or falling angel; but that was not when I first met him. I remember it was a Sunday night. I had come from church; the city was dull and

dreary, the house empty and lonely, and he—Stafford—was there waiting to see my stepfather. He spoke to me so kindly that I remember every word now, and I used to listen to the music of his voice long after he was gone. I don't know how it was I met him so often, but I never went out without meeting him, and he always had some nice new volume of poetry or some beautiful flowers for me.

Then came that time of dreadful tribulation, when my father died suddenly—they said by suicide, to escape the punishment of his usury and attempted swindling. I was quite stunned for some days; but Stafford was by my side half the time, and I felt a delicious sense of rest. Strange creatures these men are! So strong, so hard, so tender; their voices so loud, and imperious, and terrible; yet how sweetly they can whisper, and all the while they know they are making us unhappy! Was there ever anything so base as that Judas, Ossory? the man upon whom I had placed all my trust, and who deceived me before my eyes. Was there ever anything so good as that great lumbering giant Petrel? I verily believe, if every man were to assume the shape of the beast his nature most resembles, we should see all the beasts in the world, and then somebody would have to invent a great many more for the worst of men, and a few for the best. Who could have imagined Ossory, with his patriarchal beard

and grave smile, to have been a thorough-paced and deceitful villain? Who could have known that Stafford would have harboured such unholy thoughts? and what animal is there in the world that could represent the courage, and fidelity, and stupidity, and gentleness, and awful strength of my giant?

I suppose women like to be guided. I know I did, especially when I found myself in such sore trouble. When they told me that my father had suddenly died—as I heard from somebody, of an over-dose of opium, and by others, that he feared to be imprisoned as a felon, and committed suicide—I was absolutely at a loss what to do. I knew that I had to leave the big gloomy house, and I was glad of it, but where to go and what to do after that, I had no idea of. If I had been differently brought up, I daresay I should have been much wiser, and a good deal more able to take care of myself. But it was so pleasant to believe that my dear Stafford had been appointed guardian, and to know that I should be looked after by him and Ossory; and I was so thankful to him when he proposed that I should go to Paris for a little while, for change of scene, for I was heartily tired of the great gloomy city house; and latterly, when I was quite alone, I used to cry a good deal, and neglect my painting and my music, altogether. I had heard



a great deal about the beauty of Paris and its Elysian fields, and 'the splendid things to be seen in it; and I thought it so kind and considerate of him to give me a nice French maid who understood dressmaking so perfectly, and who did my hair so prettily, that I could have kissed her when I looked in the glass the first morning after she came. I never knew till that moment that I had such a lot of hair, and that it was of such a beautiful colour, but somehow Madeleine knew the exact way to make everything look nice and pretty. If she had not always looked at me out of the corners of her eyes, I should have liked her very much, but I never could understand why her lips should smile, and her eyes often look so cross, at me.

Nobody could have been more tender and attentive than Stafford, while we were travelling towards the fair city. Everything I wished was done in a moment. I do believe that if I had wished for a piece of the moon, I should have had it. How delicious was that passage across the Channel! how calm and sparkling the boundless sea! how clear the sky! how fragrant and balmy the summer air! and my own soul how serene! I could not grieve much for the loss of my father, for there was a jubilant voice within me, singing of liberty, and happiness, and beauty, and sunny skies, and long days full of joy.

Why should those days have been so short, so

very short? Why should the sun have been blotted out of my life so soon? I knew that Stafford was a gentleman, and must be very wealthy, and I often thought, when I read "Ivanhoe," that the Lion-hearted must have looked like him; but I never knew until that day that he was a nobleman. I knew him as Mr. Stafford, and I had never thought of anything else, but as the steamer approached Calais harbour, I walked up to where he was talking to Ossory.

"Have you thoroughly understood the arrangements, Ossory?" asked he.

"Yes, my lord," said Ossory, touching his hat.

I looked up at Stafford when I heard this, and he who faced me gave Ossory such a look that it sent a thrill of horror through me. It was a bad look, a wicked cruel look, and though it only lasted for a moment, Ossory seemed to understand it thoroughly, for he went away very quietly. Stafford may have seen the puzzled expression on my face, for, on leading me back to my seat, he asked, with tenderness, whether I had lost or wanted anything.

"No," said I, with a very unpleasant fluttering at my heart; "but why did you look at poor Ossory so angrily?"

"Did I look angrily?" said he with a smile. "I did not want you to know, but the stupid fellow had nearly forgotten your hat-box."

"Is that all?" said I, much relieved. "Poor fellow! he crept away so disheartened, I thought. But, Stafford?"

"Well, Princess," whispered he, for he sometimes used to call me Princess, and sometimes Queen Kate.

"Why did Ossory call you 'my lord?'" I trembled again at this, because I began to feel very wretched.

"Why?" said he, biting his lip, and then laughing, not at all in his usual manner. "Did not I tell you that he was stupid?"

"Yes, but that's not stupid," said I. "For I have sometimes wanted to do it myself, and you don't call me stupid."


"I'll call you my lady," said he, smiling, "for you are a dear little lady, and you make me very happy."

He had taken my hand, and as he said these words in a low, sweet voice, and pressed my hand tenderly, the blood rushed to my head and cheeks, and it was a very good thing that I had my veil on, for I felt that several people were watching us, and I should have looked dreadfully foolish. I don't know why or how, but I could have cried, and run away at that moment, and I began to wonder what he meant, and whether everything was true that had been told me; and then I chid myself again for having such thoughts, and yet

I was not quite satisfied with myself, and although I trembled much, I thought it better to ask Stafford some more questions, when the boat landed at the pier, and the bustle put me out altogether.

The arrangements of the journey were certainly delightfully made. We had a carriage to ourselves, and it was so pleasant to rush through the beautiful country and gaze upon the lovely scenery, and ask as many questions as I liked without tiring my friend a bit, for he seemed as delighted as I was. There was a handsome private carriage waiting for us at the station, and Stafford told me and Madeleine to drive on to the hotel, saying that he would follow immediately. During the drive I began to feel that the unusual fatigue had been too much for me. I felt that I was going to be hysterical, and silly, and weak, and that the best thing I could do was to go to bed at once, so that I might be quite fresh in the morning. When I told Madeleine so she did not answer, but only smiled.

I was quite surprised at the elegant splendour of my room at the Hotel. It had a balcony looking out upon the gardens of the Tuileries, and everything about it was so beautiful and grand that I began to think it must cost a great deal of money, and that I must be very rich to be able to afford so much. And the most curious



part was that Madeleine's bed-room, next to mine, with a door in between, was quite as handsome, which I thought rather extravagant. When I looked at my watch I found it was past nine; and as I felt very tired I resolved to have a simple cup of tea and go to bed.

"Tea, madame!" said Madeleine, with surprise; but monsieur has ordered a very *recherché* little dinner?

"I am too tired, Madeleine," said I, throwing myself on the yielding sofa, "and I should be ill to-morrow. So please do what I say." Madeleine went away grumbling; and while she was gone I nearly fell asleep, and felt that I should be very restless, and that probably I should have my sleep-walking coming on again, which would be rather awkward in a strange house, so I determined to have Madeleine with me, instead of letting her be in the next room. When she came back again, she looked quite flurried and out of temper.

"Monsieur has come," said she, "and he hopes to have the pleasure of seeing you at dinner in half an hour."

"You must go down and excuse me to Mr. Stafford," said I, "for I feel I am much too tired to come down. I shall see him to-morrow; and, Madeleine, both these rooms are very long, and as my bed stands at one end and yours at the other,

you might be out of call during the night, especially if we have the windows open."

"I don't understand, madame," said Madeleine, with a strange smile.

"Why, I mean that you need not sleep in your own room," said I; "you had better sleep with me."

"But that is not my room, madame," said she, with a toss of her head towards the open door.

"That is not your room!" said I, wondering what she was thinking about, "why, whose room can it be then?"

"It belongs to monsieur," answered Madeleine.

"To monsieur? To what monsieur?"

"To monsieur, your husband. I never did sleep in such a pretty room in my life, madame."

"My husband," I repeated laughing, for I really thought she was joking, "if you know where he is, you know more than I do."

"Oh," said she, with a shrug of her shoulders, "that is equal to me. I mean Monsieur Stafford."

"Is that Mr. Stafford's room?" said I, while I felt the blood tingling in my cheeks. She nodded and glared out of the corners of her eyes.

"Then you must shut the door and give me the key," said I, quite calmly. She hesitated, and as she looked at me, smiled such a false smile, that if I had been a man I would have struck

her. I jumped up, ran to the door, locked it, bolted it, put the key in my pocket, and did the same with the one opening on the corridor. I resolved at that moment that I would part with that woman as soon as ever I could, for I felt that she was false and untrue, and deceiving me, although I had no idea in what way. When I had locked both doors I returned to the sofa.

"Now give me some tea, as strong as you can," said I, in as curt a tone as I could assume, "and then you can go down and tell Mr. Stafford that I am very tired, and hope to see him in the morning. After that you can undress me, and bring your things here, for when I am tired, and not very well, I am given to walking in my sleep, and you must be with me."

After she had given me the tea, Madeleine went down-stairs without saying a word, and stopped away a good deal longer than I had expected. She excused herself by saying that the stupid waiter had put her things in a room quite at the other end of the hotel, and that she had to carry them all that way. The strong tea revived me a good deal, but I still felt very tired, and fearing that I might perhaps get out of bed without Madeleine noticing it, I carefully locked the door, and put the keys under my pillow; for if I had left them in the lock, I should be sure to have turned them in my sleep. When I rose next

morning I felt quite fresh, and through the open window the sounds of the great city, and the flood of light came pouring in, and I felt as if I rested on air, until something, I don't know what, fell over my soul, and seemed to veil it from the glorious sunshine. I felt as if some dear friend had died, or as if I had lost something which I had been accustomed to see or hear every moment. I puzzled a good deal to find out what it was, but went down to breakfast without being any wiser. It was the same kind of feeling that I used to have when I had been naughty to dear mamma, and she would not speak to me; only it was not so bitter and hopeless.

CHAPTER XXII.

KATHERINE'S DIARY CONTINUED.

THERE was a dreadful cloud on Stafford's brow when I entered the room. He had been waiting some time, and though he tried to look cheerful, and was as polite as ever, he treated me with a great deal more coldness than usual; and I was so hurt at this, that I have no doubt I must have shown it in my face. At last I ventured to ask him what had happened, that could have made him so different from last night, upon which he gave me such a strange look, that I felt almost a regret that I ever consented to go to Paris under his charge. I felt instinctively that there was something more lurking in his eyes than he had ever shown to me, and that if I could only watch him unknown to himself, I should see my dear Stafford in a different light. All this shot across my brain in a second, as quickly, indeed, as the look passed from his face.

"I hope you have spent an agreeable night by

the side of that Frenchwoman, Miss Blainville?" said he politely.

"Mrs. Blainville, if you please," said I, with as much dignity as I could command, for I was determined to show him that I could be cold and distant as well as he. Besides, I very much wished to provoke him.

"Oh, I forgot that you still adhere to that fiction of your marriage," said he, with a smile.

"I never knew before that it was a fiction," said I calmly, "and I am surprised that you call it so."

"My dear Katherine," said he, seating himself close to me, and looking all his old self, "my dear Queen Kate, are you sorry that it is a fiction, for I may tell you now that the ceremony was really without any value whatever. When my researches brought this great discovery to me, I felt as if a new life had come to me, for I knew that there was no obstacle to that which my heart so earnestly desires—yourself, my darling. You love me, I know, for you have often told me so. And I waited until this morning to tell you the glorious news, that henceforth we may belong to each other for ever."

He had seized one of my hands from the first, and now, while he said these last words, he embraced me with a fire to which I had not been accustomed from any one, not even from him. He had always kissed my forehead or my cheek, and more frequently still my hand, with

a grace and elegance which I always thought so charming; but when I felt his burning lips upon mine, and felt his heart beating wildly against my bosom, while the strange words which he had spoken were still vainly seeking for an entrance into my brain, I was seized with a giddiness, and I was not unwilling to forget the world and everything in it for a moment, and to sink back with a delicious sense of rest into those strong arms that had enveloped me. I closed my eyes, and I felt Stafford's hot kisses falling upon my lips.

But when I opened my eyes suddenly, I was so startled by what I saw that I could almost have screamed out. I had expected to see Stafford's face lighted up with love and happiness; but the opportunity which I had desired of seeing him unawares had come, and I beheld his face, his beautiful, noble features, strangely disfigured, and wearing a look so awful and appalling that I involuntarily shuddered. I felt as if I lay in the arms of one of the wicked ancestors of which he had told me so often, and some of whose portraits he had occasionally shown me. In a moment the giddiness, the sense of rest, and the delight I had experienced at his words, were gone. It was as though I heard another man's voice cry out loudly, "He lies—he lies;" and the little ring round my neck pressed upon my breast with a weight so heavy, so heavy that I sighed.

Not without some difficulty I disengaged myself from his arms, and walked to the open window to cool my burning cheeks. He followed me, and again put his arm round my waist. I disengaged his hand quickly—for the voice was stronger than ever in my ears. He looked at me somewhat puzzled.

"You have told me, my dear Stafford," said I, "that the marriage ceremony was a farce, but I do not understand it."

"It is too difficult for you to understand, my darling," said he, stepping forward to embrace me again; "I was scarcely able."

"But surely," said I, stepping backward, and pushing away his arm, "the ceremony has taken place properly enough. The clergyman who married us was the one who sometimes preached to us on Sunday, and we repeated all he said. How do you know it was a farce?"

"Because I employed the cleverest lawyers in London to hunt up the law on the subject," replied he, "and they have all told me that the ceremony was absolutely illegal and worthless. You are Miss Blainville, and nobody's queen but mine."

"Then," said I, with decision, "I have no right to all these trinkets, which you told me belonged to my husband's family, and I have no right to the money which you have given me in his name; and I have no right to travel so expensively."

"What a determined queen she is," exclaimed he, laughingly, for I had taken off a gold bracelet and gold chain which he said were my husband's property. "I should have told you further," continued he, "that in virtue of the deed, half his property goes to you, in liquidation of the debt, and that as long as he does not come forward to claim his share you are entitled to the full sum."

"Which means," said I, "that I must live and enjoy myself on another man's money, without first telling him how the circumstances are altered. I shall never do that. I must return these at once."

"There's no need, my darling Kate," said he, "for they are not his at all. I gave them to you."

"You gave them to me? Then there are ten times more reasons why I must give them back."

"Give them back, Kate?" said he, sorrowfully. "Will you not accept, from a real and loving husband, what you accepted from an imaginary one? For he was never more than that."

"You are not my husband," said I, almost moved to tears; for I don't mind confessing that I thought it very hard to give up everything, although I felt I was acting perfectly right.

"I shall be in half-an-hour," said he triumphantly, "for I have arranged everything, and we shall drive from here to the church."

I was amazed at this intelligence, and could do nothing but shake my head, which I did a

great many times, and made all my hair come undone, and tumble over my shoulders. Stafford asked why I shook my head.

"I can't accept all this as true," said I, "until I have seen my uncle. The lawyers must have deceived you, or they are perhaps too clever, and have made out a law which does not exist. I must first write to or see Dr. Plumper, who lives at Beecham; and if he says that you are right, I shall believe it."

"Dr. Plumper is still travelling in Norway," said he.

"But we can wait until he comes back, or writes to me explicitly."

"Not before?" said he, with a dark frown, and looking at me intently, and with flaming eyes.

"Not before," I answered, blushing under his gaze, and trying to bind my tiresome hair into a knot.


I can't describe the scene that followed—I don't remember it; but I know that if God had not helped me, I should have given in. When I used to read in books that people tried all their arts of persuasion, I never knew what it meant until that morning. He implored me; he knelt to me, and buried his head in my lap, and wept hot tears over me, and I over him; he threatened, and stormed, and swore; and then, casting himself at my feet again, besought me to believe him, and

love him as he loved me. But through it all I heard that one voice—"He lies! he lies!" and I kept murmuring to myself, "Mrs. Charles Blainville, you are married," and "Katherine Blainville, what have you hanging round your neck?" And occasionally I sent up a tiny prayer that this might not last too long; and suddenly he became very quiet, and said that it was, perhaps, better so, and that we must write to Dr. Plumper at once, and await his answer. In the meantime it would be wiser for me to retire to the furnished house which he had hired at Choisy le Roi, and there wait, with my maid and servant, until I should be thoroughly convinced. To this I gladly consented; for the interview had tired me out so thoroughly, and the city looked so hot and dusty, that I was grateful to him for ordering the carriage immediately, and making every arrangement for having me conveyed to the country house, which he described as being fit for a princess, and surrounded by forests on all sides.

The terms in which he had described the country house were very correct, only they were not half good enough. It was to me a little palace in a little paradise. I found there everything I could desire. All the pictures I loved, all the books I cherished, the music I loved to hear, the flowers which I had told him were my favourites—they were all there. The very furniture of the

room was deliciously to my taste, and my little boudoir was a great deal too pretty to describe. How, then, was it that I felt unhappy? I noticed at the time, although it did not strike me, that after having travelled for some miles through the loveliest scenery, we first drove through a large gate, which seemed to me as heavy and strong as that of a prison; and after continuing our road for another mile through a sombre and ancient forest, we passed through a second gate; and then, after some minutes, the house lay before us, surrounded by a smiling meadow. To my surprise, not one of the attendants, of whom there were not many, spoke one word of English. Every wish or order of mine had to be translated by my maid or Ossory; and when they were not near me, I had to make myself understood by signs, at which the wicked old men—for they were all old—shrugged their shoulders.

That evening, however, I felt too excited to think about all this. I tried the beautiful piano, I dipped into the books, I smelt and watered the flowers, I walked about in the lovely garden; and then, feeling again very tired, I got Madeleine to come up-stairs with me; and being again afraid that I might begin to wander in the middle of the night, I insisted on her sharing my bed, at which she laughed very much, and said that we English young ladies were eccentric.



It was next day that I began to feel miserable, for it was then that I began to feel lonely. I had come to Paris to see the great city, and to be astonished by a hundred beauties and novelties every day; and I had been, by some strange whirl of circumstances, almost without being able to think about the matter, placed in this solitary house, with no friend but Ossory, who was very quiet indeed. It rained that day, and I felt that I could cry, but I did not. Then came Stafford, with new books, and some pretty little knick-knacks; and he was quite as agreeable and fascinating as ever, until he began to press me again to have the marriage celebrated that day. I could not but think it very strange that he should press me so, vowing and declaring that Dr. Plumper's answer must of course be exactly what he said; for surely a day could make no difference to him. But he was more importunate than on the previous day, and it was a very heavy struggle to me to refuse him. But I had come to think that he was not sincere, and what happened the next day quite convinced me of the truth of this.

I had by that time fully made up my mind that I would not marry Stafford under any consideration—even if Dr. Plumper's answer should be all he had said; for while I lay awake during the night, I had questioned myself very seriously whether it ever could be so. There was one test

which I think every woman ought to put to herself when she is in doubt, whether she loves a man thoroughly or not. I said to myself, "Katherine, would you like to spend your life with Stafford on an uninhabited island? Do you trust him to be ever-kind, and ever-loving and tender?" I did not hesitate long in answering that, for I had already once or twice had some misgiving as to the purity and sincerity of his attachment. So next morning, when I saw him riding up to the house on his splendid brown horse, I set my face very gravely, and resolved to be very firm. He entered the room joyously, waving a letter in his hand, which proved to be Dr. Plumper's answer, to the effect that he himself had been misled, and that the marriage was void. I read it with great calmness, and, giving it back to Stafford, looked at him with as much unconcern as I could muster. I could see that he was puzzled by my demeanour.

"I am sincerely glad that you have received so quick an answer," said I, "for I thought the quickest letter could not be here before to-morrow."

"I sent a special messenger right through," said he hastily. "I left no stone unturned."

"I am so much obliged to you," said I, "and I shall now be so glad to return to Paris. I have quite recovered from my fatigue, and shall enjoy the sights in the city so much. If you allow me,

I shall telegraph for Dr. Plumper to come over to Paris as soon as convenient, that he may join our little party, and help us to enjoy ourselves."

"What should that be for?" asked he, with a terrible frown. "We don't want an old parson to follow us about."

"I shall be so glad of his company and advice," said I, "and I think you will like him."

"I shall do no such thing," answered he, with trembling lip; "and I don't understand you. Do you want him to marry us?"

"Not at present. I am still very young, and I should so like to see a little of the world first."

"But you have promised that when this obstacle was cleared out of the way, you would be mine."

"I never promised anything, Stafford. I only said that I could not believe the marriage to be void unless Dr. Plumper told me so."

"Then you shall promise now," said he, with some vehemence. "I am not going to be humbugged, Katherine; and now that Dr. Plumper has satisfied you, there is no reason why we should not be happy at once."

He looked anything but happy at that moment, and I could do nothing but shake my head very much, until I was afraid that my hair would come undone again. Stafford flew into a fine passion, and said such ridiculous things about the heartlessness and cruelty of women, that I could not help

laughing—which, of course, made him ever so much worse. And then, I suppose, he lost control of himself, and said what he was afterwards sorry for—but which, although it came upon me at the time as a thunderclap, I am glad to have heard. When he saw me laugh, he stepped in front of me, and said in a peculiarly quiet manner, that I did perhaps not know where I was. That I was entirely in his power, and could not return to Paris unless he liked. That this solitary house, standing in the midst of a vast wood, and surrounded by a double wall, was his own, and that all the servants were strangers—Spaniards, Russians, and so on—very few of them speaking French, and none English; that they had strict orders to let nobody out except by his special permission, and that therefore I might consider myself a prisoner. Before I could take in all he meant, he had gone on telling me that my marriage with him was the only thing now left for me, as my character in London was ruined. Every one of my friends there believed that I had run away with him, and that I was a bad girl, and would never come back, and that I was worse than dead; and when he saw the tears come into my eyes at that, I do believe he was overwhelmed with remorse, for he took my hands, and tried to kiss those tears away, and besought me in the most passionate terms to refuse no longer, for that he knew it was all his own doing,

and longed to put me before the world as his own beautiful wife.

I stepped back indignantly, and refused — although the hot tears were running down my cheeks—to have anything to say to him, until I was again at liberty, and under the care of Dr. Plumper, who I was sure would not refuse to come over. I asked him to let me go at once—I demanded it—I insisted—but he would not listen. I rang the bell for Madeleine, and told her to order the carriage, for that I desired to go back to Paris at once. Madeleine looked at Stafford, who shook his head, whereupon she shrugged her shoulder, and making a silent curtsy, left the room. Then Stafford rang the bell and Ossory came in—Ossory, whom I had put such faith in, and who now looked at me with a cold and horrible smile, while Stafford told him that I was to remain here until further orders, and that he would be responsible for my safety. That I was quite at liberty to roam about at will through the grounds and forest, but that I was on no account to pass through the gate.

I felt stunned when I heard this, and do not remember anything else, although Stafford still spoke for some time. I had no idea what it all meant, but I felt that some infamous and wicked plot was being carried out to bring me to ruin. I said not a word, but went into my room and locked myself in. Then I fell upon my knees,

and prayed to God for assistance in this awful hour. For three days I was like one bewildered. I tried to pass the first gate, but it was locked, and the porter understood me not. I made signs, but he shook his head. I gave him my purse, but he laughed and held out another. I burst into tears, and he turned his back upon me, and began to laugh. I walked along the wall, and carefully examined every stone of it, but it was nowhere lower than fifteen feet, and it was impossible to reach it even by means of the trees. Still I could not and would not believe that I had been so shamefully used, and waited for two days, endeavouring each day to pass the gates—but being each day refused. When I tried to tempt Madeleine, she plainly told me that Mr. Stafford was much richer than I, and that she had promised to obey him, and would not listen to me. As for Ossory—that detestable creature waited upon me with the greatest politeness, but when I demanded of him to release me, he affected not to understand me, and left the room.

When I found this out my soul became indignant, and I vowed I would never again speak to the man who had dared to behave thus to me. When I heard or saw Stafford arrive, I locked myself in my room and sent down word that I would not see him; it was only when I saw him ride away that I left my apartments. This lasted for a week, and

what I suffered in that week my heavenly Father knows. I tried to move every one of the attendants by every means in my power, but I was soon convinced that Stafford had spoken truly there. They understood no English, and could not, or would not, comprehend me.

One morning I went into the grounds for a solitary walk, being determined not to lose my health and strength; my favourite resting-place was a moss-bank, by the side of a pretty little fountain which had been erected in an arbour in the densest part of the wood. It seemed that something had gone wrong with the fountain, for it played no longer, and had become covered with moss and dirt. This morning, as I approached the spot, I was startled to see a man kneeling in front of the basin, evidently examining it minutely. I had never seen him before, and I felt confused. To judge by his crouching form, he was of great stature and very powerful.

While I stood deliberating what to do, some slight noise of mine attracted his attention, and he turned round and looked at me. The first moment I was so frightened by the ugliness of his face, that I could have screamed. He had a most dreadful squint, and such large and irregular features, that an idea struck me that he had made them himself. But as he looked at me, and getting up pulled off his cap respectfully, I felt at once that he was honest and good, and I instinctively

determined to appeal to him. I felt it was my last chance, and as I knew nothing else at the moment, I went up to him and took his great rough hand.

I shall never forget the stare of astonishment on his face; I believe he blushed and drew his hand back with awkwardness, but I would not let him. I held it in my own, and, pointing to the gate, made a motion of flying. He shook his head and shrugged his shoulders; all the others had done that, but none of them had looked so kindly at me. I felt that all was not lost, and sank on my knees before him, thinking that he was probably some Russian or Italian, and might understand that language of supplication.

"Well, bligh me," said he in good English, looking down at me and scratching his head very determinedly.

"Are you English?" said I, jumping up, as my heart leaped with joyous agitation, "then you must help me. You are good."

"Well, bligh me," said he again, still with his hand in his hair, but smiling this time, and squinting fearfully. "Is there a game on?"

I told him in a few rapid words what circumstances I was in, and what I would have him do—but it was some time before I could make him understand. He was continually wanting somebody to bligh him—whatever that may mean—and wondering at the extraordinary game; but at last

I managed to convince him of the truth of my story. I had been cautious enough to request him to go on with his work at the fountain, while I sat down on the seat and talked to him, but when the full truth dawned upon him he jumped up and squinted at me so intently that I was afraid every moment his eyes would disappear altogether; and then, kneeling down before me, took my hand and kissed it as gently as if he had touched a pearl, and promised to help me with his life, if that were necessary. His plan was simply to go to the gate, wring the keeper's neck, tear the gate open and walk out; but I knew that the lodge-keeper was armed, and the gates fearfully strong. Besides, we could never have got through the second gate, if we had gone through the first. I puzzled and puzzled, but between us we could discover nothing that would help us. As last he said—

“This is another pretty tale for Petrello to bring. I know one of us, miss, that'll give help if you were in Newgate.”

And help he did bring. In three days, at dead of night, my good Petrel came, and carried me off through the gates in a carriage and four; and two hours afterwards we were free in Paris, in the Grand Hotel, he sleeping in front of my door. I felt that so powerful a man as Stafford would not leave us any rest if he could possibly pursue us, and as I had become so

alarmed at his craft and scheming, I determined to leave Petrel, stealthily, and fly by a circuitous route to Beecham. I left him asleep, and put an envelope into his pocket with some bank-notes, and a tiny letter saying that he must keep them, and also a little friend that I gave him—meaning an old gold hunter and chain which belonged to my dear father, and which I always carried about with me, though I had a nice little watch of my own.

I dropped all that very quietly into his pocket, and put on the plainest dress I could get, and took the train to Dieppe and London, and arrived at Oakham late at night. I had telegraphed to my uncle, from Paris, and he had answered immediately that he had just returned from Norway, and was wondering what I was doing in Paris. I telegraphed back that I was coming by next mail, and would he meet me in London. Of course, when we met in London, he had received no telegram or messenger of any kind from Stafford, and was surprised and bewildered at the story.

I felt that I had escaped a great danger, and could scarcely get rest and sleep. To please me my uncle took me to a quiet seaside place for a few days, and then to a station in the next county to Hampshire, from whence we drove in my uncle's own closed carriage to his house at night. I am sure nobody saw us, and for a long time nobody knew that I was in the house. I felt very ill

when I got home, and they told me that I was ill for a long time; and when I got to be better, I found my darling little Maud by my side, and I was once more happy. Uncle had attended on me all the time himself; for although he is vicar of Beecham, he is much more learned in science than in theology, and ever so many universities have conferred distinctions upon him.

When I was slowly gaining strength, though I still looked very pale and thin, uncle asked me how I should like to be companion and friend to a young widow lady, who had asked him whether he knew of such a one. I said that it all depended who the lady was, but that I had rather remain with him. He said no more at the time; but a few days afterwards, while I was sitting before the open window, a young lady dressed in deep mourning came walking through the grounds, holding a magnificent bouquet in her hands. I attempted to rise, but she ran to prevent me, and put the bouquet on my lap.

"I heard that you were fond of flowers," said she, "and I have brought you the best and sweetest I could find."

I was touched by the sound of her voice, but I could scarcely see her features, hidden as they were by the veil. She noticed my look, and putting her veil back, I saw the beautiful face of Eugenie. I loved her immediately; I could

not help it. I felt to her like a child to its mother; her face so calm, so serene, so noble, awakened in me everything that had been dormant since my own mother died. I grasped her hands, and kissed them, and cried. It was dreadfully foolish of me, and weak; but Eugenie was very much moved, and kissed me, and promised to come next day.

"Do you know who that lady is?" said my uncle, when I had told him all. "That is the Honourable Mrs. Fairfax, the young widow, who asked whether I knew of anybody that could be a companion and friend to her."

"Will you come and stay with me at Beecham Abbey for a little while?" said Eugenie next day. "I shall make you so comfortable, and Dr. Plumper, our old friend, will come and see you every day."

I could do nothing but nod, because I felt so very happy. And so, here I am. I have been here ever since; and if it were possible to remain here for ever, I should not be sorry. There is, indeed, that strange fatality of my marriage hanging over me, but I am not anxious to disturb it. My husband—if, indeed, husband he be—ran away from school soon after he got there, and nobody has ever seen him since. He has been very ill, they say; but he wrote to the lawyers two years ago, saying that he renounced all claim on the property, since he had ceased to be a

Blainville—that he had no idea of living on a fortune that had been bought by his life's happiness; that he had heard how the person whom he had been wedded to had, like her father, disgraced the name, and that he would come some day to break the bond.

“What does he mean by saying that he has ceased to be a Blainville?” said I.

“The only thing it can mean,” said my uncle, “is that he has changed his name.”

“Why should he have done that?”

“I do not know, child. But I can't wonder at it. It has not been a very lucky one.”

“My nurse told me once there was a curse on it,” said I. “And it seems almost like it!”

“If you were not superstitious, or inquisitive, I would tell you what tradition says on that subject,” said my uncle, who was very learned in all old history.

“I am not a bit superstitious,” said I, “but I am very curious.”

“The story goes, that two hundred years ago, when one of your ancestors was eaten up with pride at the greatness and wealth of his house, and spurned his daughter out of his house because she had married a poor curate, the husband, on leaving the threshold, warned him that there would be no happiness among the Blainvilles until they had lost everything—even the great name.”

"Even the name," said I pensively. "Then I am the only one who bears it now, since Charles has changed his?"

"I suppose you are, my dear," said my uncle.

"Would you have very great objections if I changed mine too?" said I. "Let us lose the name, and fulfil at least part of the prophecy. Happiness may perhaps come after that."

"What an odd idea!" said my uncle. "Change your name! Why what could you change it to?"

"To Maud's. I am sure anything of dear Maud's can't be unlucky. Let me call myself Mrs. Bell."

"I must think that over," said my uncle.

He thought it over, and next morning he told me that if I very much wished it, he saw no objection. So from that day I called myself Mrs. Bell, and everybody believes that I am a young widow. I wonder whether I shall be found out.

END OF VOL. I.

CHARLES DICKENS AND EVANS,
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1. The first part of the document is a list of the names of the persons who have been appointed to the various offices of the city of New York.



